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ABSTRACT

Serving as a vehicle for raising the profile of and thereby gaining recognition for the important research and development work being conducted in Canada in support of children and families, the "Research Connections Canada" series compiles research and/or development papers as well as background papers, analytical literature reviews, and essays. This issue of the series focuses on innovative delivery systems for early childhood care and education (ECCE) training. The papers are as follows: (1) "Mentoring: Sharing the Authority for Education with Child Care Practice" (Carmella Singleton), presenting research and case studies on the use of mentoring in professional development and in the practical components of ECCE programs; (2) "Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition [PLAR]" (Marilyn Morrice), on the role of PLAR--which grants credit to adult learners who can demonstrate college-level learning acquired through work and life experience--in ECCE training; (3) "Distance Education: Providing Bridges to Meet the Educational Needs of Early Childhood Educators" (Cheryl Brown-McLean and Joanne Morris), outlining the current role and future directions of distance education in ECCE training and the required conditions for successful implementation; (4) "Practicum in Early Childhood Care and Education Training" (Judy Pollard), outlining four key elements for successful practicum experiences and assessing the strengths and weaknesses of two models of supervision: dyadic and tri-level; (5) "An Internship Model for Early Childhood Care and Education" (JoAnne Hurst), presenting an overview of two non-early childhood internship programs and extrapolating to propose an ECCE internship model; (6) "Professional Development" (Karen Chandler), discussing professionalism as it relates to the early childhood profession and highlighting five Canadian professional development programs; (7) "Valuing Innovations in Early Childhood Care and Education Training" (Joanne Morris), summing up the preceding papers and discussing briefly the points of view as they relate to innovative training in ECCE; (8) "Models, Modes and Methods: Field Work in Early Childhood Care and Education

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Training Programs" (Adele Ritch and Dianne Liscumb), looking at the field work models and practices at 31 colleges in both urban and rural areas across Canada; and (9) "Community Colleges and the Delivery of Professional Development to the Early Childhood Care and Education Sector" (Jane Beach), synthesizing findings of several past studies and those from interviews and focus groups on the professional development activities offered to ECCE professionals. Each of the papers contains references. (HTH)

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Research Connections
CANADA

Supporting Children and Families

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Research Connections Canada: Supporting Children and Families

Research Connections Canada is a bilingual publication series published by the Canadian Child Care Federation and funded by Child Care Visions, Human Resources Development Canada. The series is an anthology of current Canadian early childhood research and development papers.

This professional publication serves as a vehicle for raising the profile of and thereby gaining recognition for the important research and development work which is being conducted currently in Canada, including that being done under Child Care Visions, Human Resources Development Canada.

Research Connections Canada includes research and/or development papers as well as background papers, analytical literature reviews and essays. This publication *series is of particular interest to training programs (at both college and university levels), academics, researchers, policy makers and licensing and regulatory agencies.*

Research Connections Canada is guided by an editorial committee. However, the papers represent the opinions of the authors and should not be considered as reflecting the opinions of the Editorial Committee, the publisher or the funder. Papers are presented essentially as submitted by the authors; there is no substantive edit or fact-checking. There is currently no peer-review process.

One copy of each issue of the series is distributed free of charge to an identified distribution network including: libraries in colleges and universities that offer training in early childhood care and education; government child care departments; national organizations in the health and social services sector; and provincial/territorial organizations with a focus on early childhood.

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Innovative Program Delivery Models

for Early Childhood Care and Education Training in Canada

Joanne Morris, Editor

PART 1

Introduction

by Joanne Morris

Joanne Morris is a faculty member at the College of the North Atlantic in St. John's. She has been president of the Canadian Child Care Federation and chairperson of the Association of Early Childhood Educators - Newfoundland and Labrador.

Preparing students to become early childhood educators is a complex process requiring an integrated set of learning experiences. Early childhood care and education (ECCE) training must be comprehensive to develop knowledgeable, reflective practitioners who design and deliver developmentally appropriate programs for young children. A balanced approach is needed to ensure a synthesis of sound theoretical understanding with standards of practices in ECCE.

Pedagogical knowledge included in the preparation of early childhood practitioners encompasses:

- child development;
- early childhood curriculum;
- conceptual development of the teaching and learning process;
- sociological perspectives of the family;

- family partnerships;
- philosophical, psychological and historical foundations;
- guiding children's behaviour;
- health, safety and nutrition; and
- professional values and ethics.

During practicum components of training, students need opportunities to draw upon content and to acquire the skills and strategies of observation, interactions with the children and their families, planning and evaluation, and facilitating development in a stimulating environment. Learning outcomes include the ability to reflect on one's own practices, analyse situations, problem solve in the context of the children and colleagues, and interpersonal communication.

There has been ongoing discussion about the extent to which the preparation of early childhood educators should have an education focus or a training focus. This discussion has been influenced by debate at the postsecondary education level about whether ECCE, as a discipline, should be delivered at community colleges or universities. Within the college community, there has been ongoing discussion about the extent to which each of the components of theory and practicum is included, and on the inclusion of a liberal education and early childhood–specific education. Vicki Mulligan and Associates[1] suggested that although ECCE has been delivered in vocationally oriented institutions, it is not equivalent to careers that can be learned by seeing skilled veterans or master craftspersons do the job and replicating what they do. One of her proposed guidelines for the preparation of early childhood practitioners is that students acquire the highest level of cognitive abilities, including critical thinking skills, problem solving, principled decision making and analysis of ethical issues. These abilities are necessary in the planning, reasoning, analysis, judgements, reflection on one's practice and introspection involved in a career of caring for children.

According to key informant interviews carried out by Joanne Morris[2] in the colleges contacted for this study, the faculty strives to maintain an appropriate balance of theory and practical components in recognition of the depth of knowledge and skill of implementation needed by students. Most cited the difficulty of the increasing demand for meeting the ongoing and growing needs of practitioners in the field within the parameters of one or two years of education. As noted by Karen Chandler,[3] the range of roles (e.g. as family day care providers, directors, family resource centre staff, resource teachers) that early childhood practitioners fill after graduating increases the demand for specialized training to address the specific knowledge, competencies and levels of education required for the various employment situations. In an unpublished paper, "Current Issues and Trends in Early Childhood Care and Education Training," Morris[4] indicated that in addition to the above-noted challenges, preservice and inservice students need ongoing educational and professional development opportunities.

Innovative Approaches

The increased challenges in delivering high quality educational experiences in the preparation of early childhood practitioners have led to the development of several innovative program delivery models. Innovation in education is part of the educational reform movement occurring in parts of the country in response to students with a broad range of backgrounds and needs, who are currently pursuing formal postsecondary education programs. Mature students; those with a wealth of work and life experiences; students who live in remote, rural and isolated areas; and students who need to manage their education around their work and family responsibilities are some examples of students seeking educational opportunities. Educational institutions have been researching and developing models of program delivery that respond to the needs of this broader student population. However, innovation in education may be met with scepticism because it is a break from traditional approaches. It is therefore important that any new or innovative program delivery model meet the academic standards of the institution and, in the case of ECCE, the principles of the *National Guidelines for Early Childhood Care and Education Training*.[5] Evaluation criteria[6] for educational institutions to use for program assessment are currently being presented for discussion in several locations across Canada. A consensus on the criteria will assist in evaluating and refining innovative program delivery models.

This report will examine some of the innovative models for program delivery and their application to ECCE training in Canada. It may also become a resource for faculty in postsecondary education. Each chapter presents a description of one program delivery model, which is highlighted in a case study format, followed by a discussion on the context and considerations necessary for its implementation as a program delivery model. The case studies are based on successful Canadian postsecondary experiences with the delivery model.

The innovative program delivery models described in this report include:

- mentoring
- PLAR
- distance education
- practicum
- internship
- professional development approaches

Carmella Singleton discusses mentoring as one innovative response to the challenges in early childhood practitioner preparation. In the chapter, a mentoring model is based on a research study completed at an ECE laboratory school. The results of this study describe the components that are necessary to include in a mentoring program. A current pilot project of a mentoring model involves second-year students in a two-year ECE diploma program as protégés and field placement supervisors in child care centres as mentors. She considers the people, practices and places of mentoring which leads to a discussion of the issues related to developing and implementing a mentoring program.

Marilyn Morrice provides the background and development of PLAR as an educational approach, and the importance of recognizing the learning acquired outside formal classroom settings. The case study of the evolution of PLAR at Red River Community College in Winnipeg, Manitoba over the last 15 years highlights many of the considerations and approaches that comprise the assessment of the knowledge and skills acquired through work and life experiences.

The chapter on distance education is co-authored by Cheryl Brown-McLean and Joanne Morris. Having worked together at the College of the North Atlantic in St. John's, Newfoundland, to bring to fruition the idea of distance learning in early childhood education (ECE), they explore the considerations and options necessary to bridge the distance between faculty and students through the use of various instructional media. The case study is about the ECCE diploma program that has been offered through distance education at the College of the North Atlantic since 1992.

Although practicum has long been a component of ECCE training, Judy Pollard presents an innovative study that examines the relationship between the student and the sponsor-educator. She describes the elements of the relationship present in successful learning experiences for students in ECCE practicum. Judy provides an in-depth description of this relationship and offers the reader several issues and conditions related to success in practicum experiences.

JoAnne Hurst has researched and written about internship as a program delivery model. Without a Canadian model in ECCE training to highlight, internships that currently exist for professional dietetics and child life specialists are discussed. Elements have been drawn from these models in order to propose a potential model for ECCE. A general description of the ECCE application is provided, which is followed by a detailed description of a potential model for ECCE Administration Internship. JoAnne discusses the conditions and issues necessary to implement internship in Canada.

The value of professional development is explored by Karen Chandler. She outlines the goals and principles of effective professional development, and a variety of training formats that offer differing outcomes for practitioners at various levels in their professional growth. Four specific models are highlighted, as well as some important considerations that are necessary to meet the ongoing professional development needs in the field.

The final chapter synthesizes some of the themes that arise from the various Canadian experiences. Valuing innovative approaches to the preparation of early childhood practitioners can be enhanced through ongoing discussion, research and development. It is hoped that the faculty and administration of educational institutions offering ECCE training may find these readings a valuable resource for further developing the quality and accessibility of learning opportunities for students.

Endnotes

1. Mulligan and Associates, 1997.
2. Morris, 1997.
3. Chandler, 1997.
4. Morris, 1997.
5. Canadian Child Care Federation, 1994.
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PART 2

Mentoring

Sharing the Authority for Education with Child Care Practice

by Carmella Singleton

Carmella Singleton is manager of the Early Childhood Care and Education Program and laboratory school at the College of the North Atlantic, St. John's. She is a member of the steering committee, as well as provincial site coordinator for the research project, *Partners in Practice: Successful Canadian Mentoring Programs.*

Abstract

This section examines the role of mentoring in professional development for ECCE programs. Mentoring is a process in which an experienced person serves as a role model to promote the professional development of a less experienced person. Research and case studies on the use of mentoring in the practical components of ECCE programs are also reviewed.

The principal case study is the mentoring experiences of the ECCE laboratory school at the College of the North Atlantic in St. John's, Newfoundland. After reviewing the experience of this and other cases, Singleton looks at mentoring opportunities in ECCE programs and the requirements for a successful mentoring program, including needed infrastructure, continuing education requirements for mentors, and support from child care centres.

> ***Mentor: Mentoring provides mentors and protégés with an opportunity to share professional and personal experiences. As a mentor, I enjoyed having formal and informal opportunities to model, coach and discuss teaching strategies that empowered my protégé to become an excellent early childhood student. It was very satisfying and rewarding to observe my protégé becoming more confident and competent in her role.***

Background

Definitions

Mentoring is "a nurturing process in which a more skilled or experienced person, serving as a role model, teaches, sponsors, encourages, counsels and befriends a less skilled or less experienced person for the purpose of promoting the latter's professional and/or personal development."[1]

Odell[2] referred to a mentor as an older, more experienced person who is committed to helping a younger, less experienced person become prepared for all aspects of life. Whitebook, Hnatiuk and Bellm[3] defined an early childhood mentor as one who is concerned not only with how children grow and learn, but about gaining skills to help other adults become more effective practitioners. The literature contains many definitions of mentoring; however, definitions such as those noted above emphasize the importance of continuous education and supports for mentors as they engage in mentoring relationships.

Many researchers, such as Hawk, Hidalgo, Huling-Austin and Murphy (cited in Huling-Austin),[4] and Whitebook, Hnatiuk and Bellm[5] maintained that mentoring is best viewed as progressing along a continuum of professional development experiences. This continuum begins with the preservice student during field placement, continues on to the novice practitioner as he or she struggles to survive and remain in a workplace that traditionally has a high rate of staff turnover, and results in the student or novice practitioner's role evolving to a mentor role. This mentor role has the potential to provide experienced practitioners with a new career path, thereby enhancing their own professional development. Professional development experiences such as these also assist with the personal and professional developmental well-being of students and novice practitioners, resulting in more consistent ECCE experiences.

> ***Protégé: My mentor made me feel more confident in myself. She always demonstrated the importance of providing consistent daily routines for children. I knew I could take risks because my mentor reassured me that it was okay to make mistakes. She maintained that my mistakes enabled her to coach me to use more appropriate teaching practices. I think being mentored during field placement ensured there was a much safer environment to learn.***

Early Childhood Care and Education Programs

ECCE programs offered in postsecondary institutions in Canada generally comprise two major components. One is theoretically based; the other is practice based. Currently, when students embark on the practice-based component (often referred to as field placement) of

their ECCE program, they are assigned field placements in college and community child care centres. While the students are involved in their field placements, experienced child care practitioners (referred to as field placement supervisors) share responsibility for their learning by providing informal support and guidance. Many practitioners, however, have few resources upon which to develop this practice-based learning experience. There is significant good will and intention in working with ECE students but little exists in the way of guiding frameworks for this specialized area of practice.

Recent research studies[6] indicated that if the practice component of ECCE programs is to ensure meaningful and purposeful preservice experiences, and hopefully assure successful future child care practitioners, it is crucial that it include opportunities for students to reflect on their teaching experiences. When ECCE students are provided with opportunities to analyse and reflect on their teaching in an emotionally supportive environment, a foundation is built so that they become autonomous and confident thinkers. Jones[7] maintained that when these students graduate and become practitioners in child care settings, a domino effect occurs. An enriched, formal field placement program for ECCE students enhances the quality of care and education the students will provide when they become practitioners.

Mentoring in Practice: Beginning at the Preservice Level

Providing quality practice-based education experiences for students who are preparing to become child care practitioners in the 1990s presents many challenges to postsecondary ECCE programs throughout Canada. Recent research studies indicate that if practice-based events are to ensure quality experiences for students, it is crucial to provide the students' field placement supervisors with support and education on how to formally guide students.[8] This support and education ensures that the field placement supervisors are qualified and empowered to support and guide students during this critical time. Such support and education have the potential to address many of the challenges that face ECCE programs in Canada. One innovative approach of providing support, recognition and education for field placement supervisors is mentoring.

Mentoring programs include opportunities for experienced child care practitioners and students to reflect upon and analyse the field placement experiences to establish professional relationships. They are a promising and innovative program delivery model that has the potential to enhance existing and future preservice ECCE programs. Mentoring programs present a unique way of understanding and meeting the needs of students (protégés) and experienced child care practitioners (mentors).

Throughout the United States and Canada, one of the most promising professional development approaches for child care practitioners is the creation of ECCE mentoring programs. The importance of establishing mentoring programs for beginning teachers within

the K-12 system is well documented by numerous researchers[9] and, quite recently, has also been explored in ECCE programs.[10]

The mentoring model presented in this chapter is founded on a research study completed at the ECCE laboratory school at the College of the North Atlantic in St. John's, Newfoundland,[11] and supporting references. The work of four experienced child care practitioners and four ECCE preservice students was examined over a three-month field placement experience. The researcher was seeking to enhance the practice component of the ECCE program at the college by establishing a formal mentoring program for experienced child care practitioners and preservice students as they worked collaboratively during field placement. She found that the field placement component of the program was strengthened when the mentors and protégés were provided daily opportunities that promoted their reflective thinking.

During the study, the researcher supported and observed the participants in a variety of situations (i.e. education seminars, personal interviews, working with children and each other, conferences and journal writing). During the education seminars, the researcher encouraged the participants to examine and reflect on the teaching practices they engaged in during field placement. The researcher maintained that the improvement of child care practice was possible when practitioners examined and reflected on present child care practices and made changes based on these reflections. She contended that reflective practices such as conferences and journal writing made explicit to the preservice student what the experienced child care practitioner knew and believed about the care and education of young children.

The child care practitioners' knowledge of what constitutes developmentally appropriate practice in the care and education of young children is often embedded in their daily practice. Singleton[12] stated that without formal opportunities to reflect on these daily practices, practitioners often miss out on opportunities to improve their practice and they may not always model this knowledge and expertise to preservice students during field placement. During her study, opportunities were provided that encouraged reflective thinking in all participants. The results of the study helped to identify components that are necessary to include in a reflective mentoring program for child care practitioners. The discussion focusses on the people, practice and places of a mentoring program for child care practitioners who mentor ECCE preservice students. An overview of two mentoring programs in the United States and Canada, with a specific emphasis on ECCE implementation, provides additional information on the importance of mentoring beginning at the preservice level. Also included are the implications for ECCE implementation and suggestions for the conditions that must be met to ensure a meaningful and successful program.

Mentoring: A Case Study

A qualitative research study undertaken by Singleton[13] explored the components that are necessary to include in a postsecondary ECCE mentoring program. During this study, the mentors planned formal opportunities for the protégés to reflect on their practice teaching experiences during field placement. These opportunities promoted professional, supportive and supervisory relationships between the two. As the research evolved, the mentors and protégés were empowered to develop meaningful mentoring relationships and become reflective thinkers.

> ***Mentor: Mentoring has kept me in touch more with the academic part of the program...more so than in previous field placements. I guess just meeting with the students daily and talking about their work and connecting their work with children to their course work was different from the past years. We had the time to discuss...where they were in their course work...and the kinds of experiences (practical) they needed to support what they were learning (academic).***

Mentoring: The People

The ultimate success of a mentoring program hinges on the trust and rapport established between a mentor and protégé early in the relationship.[14] Establishing trust and rapport hinges very much on the credibility of mentors in their mentoring role. Singleton[15] found that a credible and effective mentor to ECCE preservice students must demonstrate knowledge and expertise in the following areas:

Mentors are knowledgeable about the courses and content included in the students' ECCE program.
Recent research findings[16] relating specifically to mentoring preservice students indicated that for effective mentoring to occur, mentors must participate fully in the planning of the students' education. If mentors are to appear authoritative and credible in their role, they must be well informed about the details of the education program the students are following. Wilkin specifically addressed the importance of the link between the theoretical and practice components of education and stated that, if mentors are not aware of the theory introduced, it is impossible for them to assist protégés to link theory to practice during their field placement.

Practice teachers should be educated to encourage this link between theory and practice. VanderVen maintained that when practitioners are so educated, they will be instrumental in connecting the two components: "knowledge generated in practice needs to be recorded and processed (academic); theory (academic) needs to be tested in the direct setting (service)."[17] Singleton[18] found that when mentors had course and content knowledge relating specifically

to the education program, they were more confident and effective at assisting protégés to link related theory to practice.

Mentors are knowledgeable about young children's development and how they learn.
Knowledge of young children's development was critical when mentors encouraged their protégés to reflect on teaching practices. In fact, this knowledge was the foundation of the mentors' reflective feedback provided to the protégés in conferences.[19] For example, when one of the mentors in the study provided feedback to her protégé on how the protégé had guided the children's behaviour earlier in the day, the mentor was reflecting on personal knowledge of young children's emotional development.

> ***Mentor: They (children) don't always want me to do it (offer to help children talk to a child they have hurt) but I think it is so important to let the other child know how it makes the child who has been hurt feel. He needs to know that it does hurt and as adults we can't allow one child to hurt another child. You demonstrated to (child's name) that there were consequences to his behaviour when you went with him to talk to the other child.... Have you noticed when I guide children in this manner? I find it very respectful to all children when I can help create good social relationships between them. You will find as you make decisions about the strategies and skills you will use to guide children's behaviours that each situation and child is unique. I think the strategy you used in this situation fit the children involved and the situation.***

Mentors are knowledgeable about professional and personal responsibilities to a protégé.
Mentors must be aware of the importance of both the professional and personal responsibilities to their protégés. Singleton[20] found that when mentors were knowledgeable about these responsibilities, they were more confident overall in their mentor role.

> ***Protégé: It is the support that helps you ... professionally and personally. When you work with someone on a professional level ... it is also important for that person to know you on a personal side. If that isn't there, it is difficult.***

Mentors are knowledgeable about the professional, emotional and social benefits of mentoring.
Successful mentors viewed their role as an opportunity for thoughtful reflection and personal growth, particularly when they described and reviewed their own practices for the purpose of mentoring preservice students. Contributing to their own profession and passing the torch to the next generation are benefits many mentors cited when describing their supportive role.

Singleton[21] discovered that as mentors become knowledgeable about the professional, emotional and social benefits of mentoring, they were more effective at meeting the overall needs of their protégés. Gold[22] stated that mentoring must benefit the overall needs of protégés. She maintained that benefits must address three categories: emotional-physical, psycho-social and personal-intellectual. She thought that to address only the professional benefits of mentoring without a plan to deal effectively with the emotional benefits was setting the protégés up for failure. When protégés are not supported emotionally, they may not be capable of applying the skills learned during education.

During interviews conducted after the study,[23] both parties identified several emotional benefits of mentoring. Mentors emphasized the importance of their increased awareness of providing individualized attention to protégés and opportunities to self-reflect; protégés mentioned that the individual attention they received from their mentors during field placement was critical to their increased self-confidence.

Enz[24] emphasized the need to base mentoring goals on the needs and concerns of protégés and that this information should become the foundation for all efforts to benefit the protégés. Singleton[25] believed that when mentors become knowledgeable about the benefits of mentoring for themselves and their protégés, a more informed foundation can be ensured before implementing a mentoring program.

Resources and support to mentors

Many researchers have studied the importance that mentor characteristics have on a mentoring relationship. According to Hardcastle and Kay[26] and Odell,[27] it is necessary for mentors to be wise, friendly, caring, humorous, nurturing, ethical and committed to the profession. Whitebook, Hnatiuk and Bellm[28] believed that there are characteristics specific to early childhood educators who are interested in becoming mentors. They maintained that mentors must have a sound background in early childhood education, a sound knowledge-based philosophy about what constitutes high quality child care, a minimum amount of teaching experience in child care, excellent interpersonal skills for working with adults and time to make a commitment to the mentoring program.

Singleton[29] emphasized that mentors were most effective when they demonstrated strong communication skills and were friendly, honest, caring, sensitive and encouraging. Protégés emphasized these characteristics throughout the study as making the difference to their overall field placement experience. She maintained that these characteristics must be considered when selection criteria are developed by postsecondary institutions for recruiting mentors to support preservice students during field placement.

Many researchers have emphasized the importance of including specific topics in a mentor education program.[30] They elaborate on including curriculum that consists of opportunities

and activities that have theoretical and practice applications. For example, course topics relating to adult and teacher development, reflective practice and mentoring roles have the potential to enrich the mentor's theoretical knowledge and practice applications. These researchers also promote emphasizing during education the enhancement of interpersonal skills, such as communication, problem solving, active listening, reflective feedback, and coaching and modelling.

Singleton[31] found that both mentors and protégés benefited from seminars before and during the mentoring experience. These seminars covered such topics as the role of the mentor, benefits of mentoring, mentoring strategies and skills, and reflective thinking. She asserted that preservice students must be introduced to the concept of mentoring and reflective practice during preservice training, and that the benefits to students will become obvious as they become experienced practitioners and are empowered to become mentors themselves. Establishing a formal mentoring program for preservice students during field placement can enhance the quality of preservice education programs, as well as the quality of child care provided in such sites. A mentoring program that includes education and support for students and field placement supervisors is an innovative program delivery model that supports and strengthens the practice-based component of ECCE programs.

Mentoring: The Practice

This section explores two strategies that mentors used to help protégés be more effective in the care and education of young children. Singleton[32] identified these strategies as modelling and coaching, and maintained that they were effective in empowering protégés to become more effective early childhood students.

Modelling as a mentoring strategy

Modelling provides protégés with the opportunity to observe new and/or appropriate teaching practices before they use them. It is also important when a protégé requires additional observation of a particular teaching strategy to improve practice.

Through discussions with the protégés and observations of their teaching practices, mentors recognized that during the first phase of field placement protégés lacked the confidence and skills necessary to plan and coordinate daily routines, plan and implement curriculum activities, and guide children's behaviours. It is important, therefore, that during this time mentors initiate opportunities to model appropriate teaching practices.

For example, on one occasion a protégé expressed concern about implementing transition time with a small group of children. The mentor responded by modelling the implementation of transition time. Later in the day she discussed with the protégé the process she followed when moving children from one routine to another.

> ***Mentor: I gave them (children) five more minutes before they went inside. Transition time is always important to young children. It prepares them for what is going to happen next. "In five minutes we are going to have lunch and we are going to go inside." That gives them the time to finish what they are doing and lets them know what is going to happen next.***

Singleton[33] is convinced that modelling, particularly during the first phase of field placement, ensures that the protégés' skills and understanding of curriculum and guidance are enhanced. They become more confident and competent in implementing teaching practices after they have had many opportunities to observe mentors modelling meaningful teaching practices.

Coaching as a mentoring strategy

Coaching refers to a strategy used by mentors to provide assistance and instruction to their protégés as they plan and implement curriculum activities and guide children's behaviours. It provides opportunities for the protégés to teach collaboratively with their mentors in a teaching/learning environment and is effective in assisting and instructing protégés to demonstrate meaningful teaching practices. Coaching is especially effective when it occurs after the protégés have had many opportunities to observe their mentors modelling a variety of teaching practices and when it is preceded or followed by mentor/protégé discussion.

During the second phase of field placement, protégés often expressed concern to their mentors about planning and implementing curriculum activities and guiding children's behaviours alone.[34] As a result, mentors ensured that they made plans jointly with their protégés, coaching them until they were comfortable planning and implementing teaching and guidance practices with little or no assistance.

When mentors coached during curriculum planning, protégés often required only minimal assistance when implementing activities. This may result from protégés reflecting on their curriculum plan and predicting where they may have difficulty during implementation. A mentor model that includes regular opportunities for the two parties to plan and evaluate curriculum activities together is more effective at encouraging protégés to implement curriculum activities earlier and more often without coaching.

Strategies That Encourage the Reflective Thinking Processes

Mentors are most effective in the context of reflective practice.[35] For reflective practices to occur, mentors must critically analyse their own teaching experiences before encouraging protégés to think reflectively about their own. This analysis is the foundation for discussion, feedback and reflection. Critical analysis or reflection of teaching practices is important to the mentors' professional growth. The authors also stated that reflection does not just happen; it requires processes that will act as motivators for reflective practice. They found that teachers

in their study organized their reflective thinking around shared problems, mentoring episodes involving coaching and modelling, and self-analytic needs. When mentors model problem-solving skills and provide feedback to protégés, they are promoting reflective thinking related to teaching practices. Conferences and journal writing are two processes that promote and encourage mentor and protégé reflective thinking about early childhood teaching practices.

"Conferencing" as a mentoring strategy

Conferences are situations where the reflective process is embedded within the formal and informal supervision of preservice students. They take place when the protégé and the mentor engage in reflective thinking related to teaching practices and student teaching experiences. During a study of field placement experiences, Richardson-Koehler[36] found that when teachers were unwilling to engage in reflection of their own or their student teachers' teaching practices, the feedback given to students lacked meaning. Conferences of the mentor/protégé pair, a minimum of 30 minutes in duration, are most meaningful when mentors provide reflective feedback and protégés have the opportunity to discuss it. Observation and conferences provide opportunities for mentors to practise skills related to becoming a skilled observer and communicator.[37] There must be reciprocal opportunities to observe the mentor/protégé relationship. When these observations are followed by discussion, both parties become more reflective about their teaching practices.

During conferences, mentors reflected on their knowledge and understanding of early childhood teaching practices as a basis for discussion, questions, suggestions and feedback.[38] When mentors reflect on their teaching practices in this manner, they are able to provide enhanced reflective feedback specific to the protégés' teaching practices. Such feedback fosters the protégés' self-esteem and confidence, and promotes reflective thinking. When mentors reflect on their and/or their protégés' teaching practices and philosophy and provide feedback to the protégés, they themselves become reflective thinkers. Reflection is incorporated into teaching practices as mentors and protégés demonstrate enhanced reflective teaching practices when planning and implementing curriculum activities and guiding children's behaviours.

Journal writing as a mentoring strategy

Daily journal writing for preservice students and beginning teachers is a mentoring strategy that encourages reflective thinking.[39] Journal writing also provides a way for preservice students to practise critical analysis and reasoning about their teaching practices. In addition, it provides college faculty with a means to challenge and support each student's reflective thinking. According to Copeland and Zeichner,[40] journal writing is the most common form of writing to stimulate reflection. However, journal writing contributes only to the development of reflection when students are taught techniques that will encourage reflective journal

writing and when they receive meaningful feedback about entry content. It is recommended that experienced teachers who are mentors must be knowledgeable about reflective journal writing before talking with their protégés and promoting their reflective thinking. There is a greater likelihood that both parties will benefit from this experience and become reflective practitioners.

Journal writing is an effective process that supports and challenges preservice students' reflective thinking.[41] Singleton[42] provided journal questions to help mentors and protégés focus their reflective writing on topics specific to teaching practices. Mentors and protégés scheduled a period at the end of each teaching day to reflect on their day and write their reflections in journals. Mentor reflections were shared with another mentor and the researcher; protégé reflections were shared with the researcher and another protégé. Daily dialogue journal writing promoted mentors and protégés' reflective thinking about early childhood teaching practices and personal needs and interests. Written reflections relating to teaching practices focussed mainly on planning and coordinating daily routines; planning and implementing curriculum activities; and guiding children's behaviours. These topics were also the most discussed during conferences and were practised when mentors and protégés worked together with children.

Mentoring: The Place

Wildman and colleagues[43] identified conditions that often constrain teacher reflection. Lack of time, poor administrative climate and personal risk were some of the most common obstacles teachers discussed. Before Singleton's study,[44] participating mentors and protégés spoke about many of these obstacles being present during previous field placements. One of the protégés commented, "There is never any time to talk formally about your day...or the children. It is really hit and miss in most cases." Many of the mentors had similar opinions. One commented, "I feel so badly at the end of the day. I realize the students need feedback but there isn't a time set aside to provide it. Often when we are cleaning the room, I try to give her (student) some feedback but it isn't focussed. There are so many interruptions."

These feelings were relatively common among the eight participants in the study. However, after the study, they recognized that when many of the obstacles were removed they were empowered to become reflective thinkers. Mentors and protégés emphasized the positive effects that organizational elements, such as uninterrupted time and quiet conference space, had in creating an environment that promoted reflective thinking.

Two mentor qualities that helped to create a non-threatening reflective thinking environment for mentors and protégés were sensitivity and encouragement.[45] When mentors were sensitive to protégés' professional and personal needs, they showed a genuine caring for them. Therefore, protégés were more open to discuss and reflect on those needs. During the study,

the researcher found many occasions when the protégés lost confidence in themselves and their teaching practices. During these times, it was important for mentors to provide encouragement. Encouragement inspired and promoted reflective thinking in protégés and themselves.

> ***Protégé: It made such a difference when you made me feel comfortable early in my placement about asking for help with my activities. That made all the difference when I planned activities that were more challenging, when I knew that you would be there to help me and I wouldn't be evaluated lower because I asked for help. You really helped to clarify your role for me. That didn't happen in my other placements. I saw my supervisor as being someone who evaluated me, not as a supportive mentor.***

Mentoring Programs: Models in Practice

Mentoring for child care practitioners began in the United States in the early 1980s. This innovative program model was a response to an identified crisis in the quality of child care services provided. There are 23 mentor programs currently offered in approximately 55 communities in the United States and Canada, although many of these programs are pilot programs with funding for a specific period of time.[46]

Two of the 23 mentor programs are discussed as they are specifically applicable to ECCE programs. The California Early Childhood Mentor Teacher Program and the St. John's, Newfoundland site in the Partners in Practice: Successful Canadian Mentoring Programs are focussed on mentoring preservice ECE students. These programs place students in college and community-based child care settings to complete their field placement under the supervision of a mentor teacher.

The California Early Childhood Mentor Teacher Program

The California Early Childhood Mentor Teacher Program was designed to support and retain experienced teachers, and to enlist them in the education of preservice students. To address these objectives, the program selects experienced child care practitioners and provides them with advanced education in adult learning and supervision. These practitioners can then apply to become mentors and use their classrooms as a field placement site to educate preservice students. Mentors supervise the students in classroom settings and encourage them to link child development theory to classroom practice. Mentors also receive opportunities for continuous growth, and support and recognition to enhance their own professional development and their efforts to enhance the quality of community services.

In a study conducted on the California Early Childhood Mentor Teacher Program, Whitebook and Sakai[47] found that as a result of participating in a mentoring program, mentors were committed to providing quality services for children by participating in continuous growth opportunities, advocating for better child care policies, and helping others learn the skills essential in caring for young children. They stated that mentoring is not only necessary during preservice, but that novice educators need to be mentored during the early stages of their career.

Partners in Practice: Successful Canadian Mentoring Programs

Partners in Practice: Successful Canadian Mentoring Programs is currently under way through three pilot sites in Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and Ontario. This project is funded through Child Care Visions, Employability and Social Partnerships, Human Resources Development Canada. Its focus is on encouraging and developing reflective practice among child care practitioners. Partners in Practice is interested in developing an infrastructure that supports the mentor–protégé relationship and ensures that it occurs throughout one's child care practice. The three programs are examining the effects of mentoring on protégés at three different stages in their career development.

Mentor–protégé pairs participating in the early childhood mentoring program in St. John's, Newfoundland are educated and experienced child care practitioners employed in college and community child care centres who are field placement supervisors interested in being models for reflective practice in a mentoring role, and full-time students in the ECCE program at the College of the North Atlantic. This program is focussed on providing a supportive structure that enhances reflective thinking in mentors and protégés within an existing framework that includes practice training for students during several field placements. Mentors and placement sites were selected using an application and screening process and the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS). The purpose of the pilot is to explore reflective practice to enhance the quality of field placement experiences and investigate the effects of mentoring on the mentor, protégé and participating child care centres.

In the Niagara region, a collaboration between Niagara College and the Early Childhood Community Development Centre in St. Catherine's is focussing on protégés who are novice child care practitioners and mentors who are trained and experienced child care practitioners. The pilot is exploring reflective practice as a way of enhancing the quality of work with children and families. This component will examine the impact of mentoring on the protégés and mentors and ultimately the influence it has on their reflective practices.

The Halifax mentoring pilot is looking at a previously existing mentoring relationship within the early childhood educator certification process and providing tools to enhance reflective thinking in the process. Candidates for voluntary certification are child care practitioners who

have reached a point in their development where they have chosen to have their practice evaluated and recognized by the Certification Council of Nova Scotia. Three candidates for certification are mentored by a facilitator, who is a certified early childhood educator. The pilot will also provide information about what motivates a protégé to become a mentor and what supports need to be in place to encourage that transition.

Each program is unique, providing rich sources of data regarding reflective practice across the programs. The project is identifying the motivation, supports, training and mentoring processes that are effective in encouraging reflective practices, and how efficient and cost-effective programs can be implemented within the diverse Canadian provincial/territorial contexts. The project is expected to have completed its research, conclusions and recommendations by March 1999.

Conclusion and Future Directions

Generally, the existing ECCE programs in Canada include several opportunities for students to participate in practice education experiences, which are often referred to as field placements. Experienced child care practitioners in college and community child care centres demonstrate good will and intention in guiding students during the practice component. However, they require additional education, supports and resources if they are to become effective mentors to ECCE students during their placements. It is not unusual for experienced child care practitioners to be placed in mentoring roles without the education, supports and resources necessary to avoid failure. In addition to having a solid educational background in early childhood education and experience as a child care practitioner, mentors need specific education in topics relating to adult and teacher development, reflective practices, mentoring roles, and the enhancement of interpersonal skills such as modelling and coaching.[48]

Ferguson[49] stated that infrastructure supports can be provided in postsecondary institutions for preservice, inservice and continuing education programs that are supportive of child care practitioners. A postsecondary institution infrastructure that includes formal education and appropriate supports for experienced child practitioners who mentor students during field placements has the potential to share the authority of education with child care practice. Such an infrastructure would ensure the continued support and recognition of educated and experienced child care practitioners. A collegial mentoring relationship that includes ECCE students, experienced child care practitioners, community child care centres and postsecondary institutions has potential benefits for all.

A future consideration for postsecondary institutions that offer ECCE programs is to explore ways of continuing the mentor relationships established during preservice into the novice practitioner stage. A plan such as this would provide continued support to novice practitioners as they adjust to the realities of their workplace. When practitioners are mentored throughout

their career beginning at the preservice stage, there is a greater likelihood that they will also become mentors. This mentor group would have the distinct advantage of being mentored during the formative stages of their career and moving through the professional development stages of mentoring along the continuum mentioned earlier.

This plan would see postsecondary institutions take a leadership role in the ongoing professional development of all educated child care practitioners. When innovative approaches like mentoring are initiated and maintained by the postsecondary institutions, mentors will more likely receive enhanced opportunities for continuous growth, and support and recognition to strengthen their own professional development as they enrich the quality of child care.

Mentoring has the potential to encourage mentors and protégés to become reflective practitioners. When mentors encourage protégés to become reflective thinkers, they too become reflective about their own practice. When mentors encouraged their protégés to reflect on their daily teaching practices, they questioned their own practice, and initiated strategies to improve their teaching practices.[50] Other research studies have had similar findings. Postsecondary institutions are encouraged to incorporate these findings into their education programs to maximize the effectiveness of the practice-based component of education.

Discussion and Recommendations for Successful Implementation

Including a mentoring component in field placements for ECCE programs will help to ensure that students are provided with quality practice experiences, and that field placement supervisors have the support and education necessary to become effective mentors. Some considerations for ECCE programs in instituting a mentoring program are:

Establish Partnerships with Practice

Postsecondary institutions that provide ECCE programs are encouraged to develop, support and coordinate mentoring programs that will encourage mentoring relationships between experienced child care practitioners and preservice students during field placements. Such programs will ensure that partnerships based on shared authority are established between child care practitioners employed in college and community child care centres and postsecondary institutions. They also have the potential to become the support system necessary for the practice component of the child care profession. With modifications, mentoring programs can become part of the larger child care practice infrastructure that currently exists within each province.

Infrastructure Support

An infrastructure that is part of the ECCE program within postsecondary institutions is necessary to encourage appropriate mentoring relationships between ECCE students and educated, experienced child care practitioners in education environments. Collaborative efforts such as established mentoring relationships have great benefits for the practice and postsecondary institutions. Mentors gain recognition and support from the institution which encourages and promotes the recruitment of future ECCE students and provides advocacy for education programs. These benefits help to ensure the viability of existing ECCE programs. When postsecondary institutions include practitioners as mentors to preservice students, they are establishing collegial partnerships that lead to continual collaboration and support of the ECCE program by the field. When partnerships are established, it is more likely that the child care practice will become visible and effective in determining education outcomes.

Infrastructure Process

When mentoring is introduced as a component of ECCE programs, it is important that criteria be developed for child care centre selection, mentor recruitment, mentor screening, mentor selection and mentor/protégé matching. This process will ensure a foundation that will promote and encourage quality placements for students as well as experienced and knowledgeable mentors.

Postsecondary institutions are encouraged to take responsibility for the recruitment of a coordinator/s with current theoretical and practice expertise in child care and education and established trust and integrity in the child care community. A significant task for this position will be to mentor the new and less experienced mentors as they assume their new roles, and take a leadership role in the development of a provincial/interprovincial mentoring partnership group.

Because mentors will need to participate in continuing education opportunities that will enhance their mentoring skills and ensure continuous professional growth, curriculum development and delivery will be a vital role for the coordinator position. The development and coordination of a resource library will also ensure that materials and information relating to mentoring are made available. Consistent access to a resource library will ensure greater opportunities for mentors and participating staff to gather and use professional materials and become reflective thinkers.

Mentoring Incentives

Mentoring is an alternate, cost-effective and viable method for the supervision of students during field placement. Inexpensive incentives such as credit vouchers to participate in mentor professional development activities can serve as appropriate tangible compensation

for participating mentors. As well, when mentors belong to a professional group that is attached to a postsecondary institution there are other intangible incentives. Sharing with others, belonging to a professional group and having a professional voice are some of the incentives identified by mentors in previous studies. When mentors have access to incentives such as these, postsecondary institutions are more likely to establish and maintain a pool of educated and experienced mentors to support preservice students during field placement.

Continuing Education Opportunities for Mentors

Effective mentoring relationships between experienced child care practitioners and preservice students will be promoted and encouraged when mentors are provided appropriate continuing education experiences. Research indicates that mentors must develop a variety of skills in order to become reflective practitioners and effective communicators.

In addition, mentors need to be aware of the principles of adult development which ensures they provide appropriate and meaningful challenges to students. To address these issues, continuing education programs for mentors must include topics such as:

- mentoring process
- adult and teacher development
- reflective practice
- interpersonal skills, such as communication, problem solving, active listening, reflective feedback, and coaching and modelling
- connecting the theoretical and practice components of education

These topics will help to promote reflective thinking related to early childhood teaching practices and develop mentors who are practice experts.

An education plan must consider the needs of mentors who are at different stages in their professional development. For example, when mentors begin their mentor role they will require support and education on a variety of topics relating to mentoring. Seminars will be necessary on a weekly or bi-weekly basis, whereas experienced mentors will require these less frequently.

Support from Participating Child Care Centre Directors and Staff

One of the conditions necessary for mentors to be successful is that the mentoring program must be supported and understood by participating child care centre directors and the mentor's co-workers. With an understanding of the program goals and a commitment to the importance of the continuous growth of the child care profession, they can ensure that the mentors and protégés are successful in their efforts to become reflective practitioners. When the directors and staff participate in a mandatory information session at the beginning of a mentoring program, it is more likely that they will become program advocates.

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PART 3

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition

One Early Childhood Education Program's History

by Marilyn Morrice

Marilyn Morrice has been a Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) advisor in the Early Childhood Education Diploma Program since 1990. She is a member of the Red River Community College PLAR Committee which is responsible for setting the standards and policies for college-wide implementation.

Abstract

This section discusses the role of Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) in ECCE training. PLAR is based on the premise that adults acquire skills and knowledge through many forms of formal and informal study. The definition and history of PLAR and where it is practised in Canada is discussed, as well as the beneficiaries of PLAR and the assessment methods used.

A case study from the Red River Community College is examined in detail, including the history of the ECCEPLAR program, the faculty and a learner profile. Case studies show that sound assessment of learners is critical in a PLAR program. Morrice identifies the three most critical factors in ECCEPLAR's success and concludes by discussing the future role for PLAR.

Overview

Introduction

Prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) awards credit to adult learners who can demonstrate college-level learning acquired through work and life experience. PLAR recognizes that individuals learn from the real world and not just formal postsecondary education. Whether a student's goal is to pursue postsecondary education for a career change,

to build on an existing career or to expand a personal knowledge base, PLAR methods can help achieve the goal.

The recognition of prior learning can be used toward the requirements of an academic or training program, occupational/professional certification or for employment/labour market entry purposes (career portfolio). This paper will focus on PLAR in an academic training program.

The History of PLAR

The basic premise that "people learn by doing" has been around for a long time. The current PLAR movement was developed in the United States during the 1940s, largely in the context of higher education and originally it meant "before college." It began as a result of veterans returning from the Second World War and putting pressure on the formal education system to recognize their applied knowledge. This lobby resulted in standardized examinations—GED (general education development)—to facilitate admission to higher educational institutions.

In the early 1970s, the Educational Testing Service at Princeton University was commissioned to study non-traditional education in a small number of colleges and universities in the northeastern United States. The project was known as the Co-operative Assessment Experiential Learning Project. Its purpose was to try to determine:

- whether it was possible to equate non-college learning with that offered in a college curriculum; and
- the variety of means that could be used for valid assessment.

CAEL, the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning, a non-profit organization, has taken a leadership role in promoting PLAR in the United States since the early 1970s. The organization has published several influential books and provided many professional development opportunities.

In Britain, PLAR was introduced in the 1980s. The British use the term "APL" (accreditation of prior learning) and have expanded the concept to incorporate prior learning as an alternative route to postsecondary education. PLAR is also offered in its own unique way in Australia, New Zealand and Canada.

Where Is PLAR Practised in Canada?

In *An Overview of PLAR Practices in Canada*,[1] Deb Blower, a Red River Community College Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Facilitator, indicated that five provinces (Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario, British Columbia) have implemented province-wide PLAR initiatives. They include the development of policies, guidelines and implementation strategies at the postsecondary level.

Although no province-wide initiatives are occurring in the other provinces and territories, some initiatives are under way which show a commitment for PLAR policy development and implementation. In Canada, colleges have taken the leadership role in the implementation of PLAR. Formal PLAR activities in specific institutions have occurred since the early 1980s in Quebec, Ontario and Manitoba. In many colleges, there has been significant development of PLAR policies and processes, implementation of PLAR systems, training of PLAR facilitators/advisors and assessors, and development of learning outcomes–based curricula. Within Canada's college system, there are experienced practitioners who have advised, implemented PLAR processes, and assessed and recognized the prior learning of college learners.

According to Blower, universities in Canada, in increasing numbers, are considering and debating the merits of PLAR. PLAR has been practised informally for many years, but the process has not been formalized. The major thrust of PLAR in the university sector is occurring in the Continuing Education area and to a limited extent in degree programs.

What Is PLAR?

PLAR is a **process** in which individuals have the opportunity to obtain credit for college-level knowledge and skills gained outside the classroom and/or through other educational programs. The focus is on what learners already know and can do. It is a process that evaluates learning gained from education, work, life experiences and personal study and compares it to the learning outcomes (criteria/standards) in college courses for the purpose of granting credit. If the learning demonstrated is equivalent to what would normally be acquired through a formal course, then credit is granted. PLAR is **not** credit for experience.

PLAR is based on the premise that adults acquire skills and knowledge through many means of formal and informal study. The distinction between formal and informal learning lies primarily in the source of control:

- **formal learning** is organized by professional educators and usually takes place in or under the auspices of an educational institution; and
- **informal** learning is experiential and acquired in situations other than formal learning.

In PLAR, the learner, not the faculty, is the focus of the process. Faculty have the responsibility of encouraging and nurturing self-directed learning. The type of recognition varies with the context. Credit may be awarded toward a particular vocation or academic qualification or for an exemption from some portion of an educational training program.

PLAR reflects four basic processes:

- **identifying** what the learner knows and can do;
- **equating** the learner's skills and/or knowledge with specific learning outcomes or qualifications required;

- **assessing** the learner against the learning outcomes; and
- **crediting** the learner appropriately.

Applying the processes systematically ensures both a sound and equitable assessment.

Who Benefits from PLAR?

The PLAR processes benefit learners, faculty, educational institutions, the workplace and society.

Learners

- encourages learners to pursue education
- eliminates duplication of learning
- increases access
- may reduce the cost of a college education
- may shorten the time to complete a college program
- increases individual self-esteem and self-confidence
- validates learning gained through work and life experience
- identifies program areas requiring further study
- assists with career development and educational planning

Faculty

- furthers the development of adult learning and teaching practices
- broadens understanding of assessment and evaluation
- increases knowledge of PLAR processes through professional development opportunities
- maintains currency of the practical application of theory

Institutions

- increases institutional efficiency by eliminating the need for unnecessary training
- increases learner recruitment and retention
- enhances the image of the institution (e.g. flexible and responsive to change)
- allows for more appropriate learner placement in programs
- increases accessibility by a broad range of learners
- provides an important service to business, community and industry
- facilitates college achievement of its mission and strategic objectives

Workplace and society

- recognizes lifelong learning and society's need for a productive and capable workforce
- encourages workplace partnerships with institutions

What Kinds of Assessment Methods Are Used in PLAR?

Institutions offering PLAR usually use three types of assessment methods. The first two are similar to traditional processes of assessing formal education: equivalencies to either course or program, and challenge processes. The third assessment method, a portfolio, is used increasingly to assess non-formal education.

Equivalency (assessment of educational documents for transfer credits)

Formal courses completed through recognized postsecondary institutions might be equivalent to courses in the learner's proposed course of study. Where there is a C grade or 60 to 70 percent correspondence between prior learning and the subject or course, credit is usually granted.

Articulation

Program equivalencies or block credit may also be transferred. Institutions with links to other institutions, professional bodies or industry may grant advanced standing to a learner who has successfully completed the course.

Challenge processes

Methods of assessment have been developed and evaluated by program faculty to measure an individual's prior learning as it relates to learning outcomes of specific courses in a college program.

Examinations (oral/written tests, projects, assignments)

These examinations are tests or projects based on learning outcomes that have been designed by program faculty to assess college-level learning for a particular course. Learners who believe they have prior learning related to a particular course are provided with a course outline and have access to appropriate texts and other learning materials to prepare for challenge examinations. They are required to demonstrate through the challenge examinations that they have equivalent learning. If successful in the challenge process for the course, credit is granted. The challenge process is useful for some courses but may not be suitable for evaluating some forms of learning.

Skill demonstrations (i.e. practical examinations, skill demonstrations and simulations)

Practical examination, skill demonstration and simulation involve the actual demonstration of an individual's prior learning as it relates to the learning outcomes of a course. The learners are provided with the course materials, such as a course outline or performance checklists, and have access to texts and other resources. Program faculty assess the specific learning outcomes using performance checklists. If successful in the challenge processes for the course, credit is granted.

Portfolio assisted

This involves the assessment of learning documented in a portfolio. The portfolio is a collection of information that demonstrates the depth and breadth of what a learner knows and can do. It backs the learner's claim that through various experiences the learner has achieved the learning outcomes for the course. The portfolio may be combined with another method such as an interview, test and/or skills demonstration.

The portfolio is useful in documenting non-formal learning. It indicates the learner's ability to reflect and analyse learning and apply it to new contexts. The process can lead the learner to a deeper understanding of personal strengths and weaknesses and help assign priority to goals.

Most portfolios include the following:

- summary of achievements or an "autobiographical narrative";
- statement of educational, career and personal goals;
- identification of learning outcomes and organization into competencies;
- matching personal learning to specific courses and programs:
- descriptions of learning;
- collection of evidence, either direct (samples) or indirect (references, articles); and
- verification from an outside source.

Case Study

Red River Community College is one of the few Canadian ECE programs approved by a provincial child care educational program approval committee and linked through an articulation process to most other training options offered in Manitoba. Its focus on transferability of program components within a wide variety of delivery models has made it accessible to most Manitobans interested in studying early childhood education and has made it an integral partner in the promotion of early childhood education in Manitoba. PLAR is an integral part of the program.

Fifteen Years in the Life of PLAR at Red River Community College

A brief history

The two-year Early Childhood Education Diploma Program at Red River Community College began in 1971 in response to the development of a child care system in Manitoba. The program focussed exclusively on preschool development. It was taught using traditional classroom methodologies and offered two exit points: a certificate, after the completion of first year, and a diploma, after the end of second year. In the mid-1970s as the program progressed, a Continuing Education (extension/night school) component was created which

differed from both the certificate and diploma programs. The complement of training alternatives more than met the needs of the day care community because day care licensing in Manitoba, at that time, simply required the licensee to produce a certificate of good health and Grade 12 education.

In 1982, Manitoba introduced comprehensive legislation requiring that all individuals working in child care centres and nursery schools have specific ECE training and that postsecondary institutions have their programs approved by a provincial Child Care Education Program Approval Committee.

Core content

To ensure that learners would be guaranteed the most up-to-date and relevant information on child care knowledge and practices, the college's evaluation process included consultation with individuals from the child care community, government staff, program graduates, learners in the course, instructional staff and college administration. This consultation set the child care training parameters and then a curriculum committee worked to identify core content and outline its specific components.

The core content was expanded to cover a range of children's development from infancy to school age and to provide an introduction to children's special needs. It included:

- child development
- child guidance and interactions
- curriculum and program processes
- communication
- family and community
- practice and professionalism

As a consequence of restructuring, the Continuing Education course content was linked to the Early Childhood Education Program in 1982. Learners were accepted on a "first-come, first-served basis." Registration was charged per course. Within this program, it was possible for an early childhood educator to attain a Child Care Services Certificate which was equivalent to the first year of the diploma program. The two courses included the same number of hours, objectives and expectations of learners.

In 1983, the ECE Program expanded further to include a Prior Learning Assessment Program as part of its delivery. This was targeted to learners who had a minimum of two years' full-time experience in a child care centre working with children from three months to six years of age. Most learners were employed in a children's centre while completing the program. Learners were enrolled on a part-time basis and attended the college only to write examinations, participate in workshops or for self-study. At the time, the number of subjects that a learner was able to challenge was based on an assessment of learning from experience.

In the spring of 1984, the Minister of Education announced a new strategy, competency-based learning, for training in postsecondary education. The definition of competency was "a skill, knowledge, and attitude needed by successful workers in an occupation." The emphasis shifted to mastery of identified competencies rather than time spent in the program.

Staff of the Early Childhood Education Program were asked to pilot this initiative. The department, together with its advisory committee, was asked to identify competencies of early childhood educators and organize the competencies into a COMCHART (competency chart) which provided a strong visual image of the competencies required in the program. Distinct learning modules, called Com Pacs, were designed for each of the competencies. Because each competency has a Com Pac, it was possible to customize learning. Each Com Pac contains clearly stated learning outcomes, learning activities, resource listings and evaluative measures.

At the time, Red River Community College's competency-based design was unique. It included learning packages, video tapes, instructor guides, test banks and the creation of a specialized ECE learning centre (library) with print and audiovisual materials. The competency-based design also incorporated a learner/staff advisory system and in-depth learner orientation to the whole Early Childhood Education Program and the specific delivery models within it.

Articulation

The Early Childhood Education Program partnered with potential learners, the early childhood education community, government (both the education and licensing branches), other training institutions and local early childhood education organizations to keep pace with the times. The Early Childhood Education Program established an articulation process among other colleges, universities and specialty training programs. The specialty programs included a vocational high school training program, a series of short courses offered in cooperation with the provincial licensing department, a family day care training program and distance education sponsored by the Manitoba Child Care Association.

Early Childhood Education PLAR

The change to a competency-based delivery model meant that there was more continuity and more flexibility for program models such as PLA. The Early Childhood Education Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition Program (ECEPLAR) was introduced in 1983 and modified in 1985 and again in 1995. The college believed that many adults employed in children's centres were learning and implementing the necessary early childhood education skills "on the job." Therefore, some of the ECE faculty were assigned to implement PLAR and a new section (delivery model) of the Early Childhood Education Program was created.

The PLAR program model was included in all the Early Childhood Education Program literature, advertised through the Continuing Education department, highlighted in several direct mail campaigns to all child care facilities in Manitoba and presented by faculty at provincial child care conferences.

How Does ECEPLAR Work?

In ECEPLAR, learners apply to be accepted into the Early Childhood Education Diploma Program at Red River Community College and are not specifically designated as PLAR students. The learners are accepted on a continuous entry basis (applications may be made at any time of the year). ECEPLAR operates 12 months of the year. The learners challenge the Early Childhood Education Program on a course-by-course basis and are able to use the full range of assessment methods: transfer of credit, challenge examinations, skill demonstrations and portfolios. They decide what PLAR process to use and how they will progress through both the first and the second year of the program. Competencies may be taken in any order, although advice is offered about sequencing. There are some course prerequisites before practical skills can be demonstrated. Learners set the pace and the PLAR faculty respond to the learner's requests.

At Red River Community College, most ECEPLAR learners are fully employed (40 hours per week) in an early childhood education setting while completing a diploma in ECE. The first year of the Early Childhood Education Program requires a learner to complete 36 competencies and three skill demonstrations. The second year requires a learner to complete 39 competencies and three skill demonstrations. ECEPLAR has grouped competencies in both years and labelled them as courses. There are 17 courses and three skill demonstrations to be completed in each year. The competencies were grouped into courses to make challenge examinations and portfolios more cost-effective for the learners. Each challenge examination and/or portfolio assessment costs $56 per course. A course represents approximately 50 hours of study. Both Continuing Education and Distance Education group the competencies in the same way as ECEPLAR. This allows the learner more flexibility (more ways) to work toward completion of an ECE diploma. Completion of the first year while fully employed usually takes 18 months; the second year takes about 24 months.

The ECEPLAR Learner

To qualify for ECEPLAR at Red River Community College, each learner is required to go through a very specific process. The ECEPLAR processes include the following:

- orientation #1 (completion of a college application for the Early Childhood Education Program); and
- orientation #2 (work toward completion of the Early Childhood Education Diploma Program).

Orientation #1

An orientation has always been mandatory because all learners need information both to understand and to begin the PLAR process. The orientation details:

- how the PLAR process works at each stage
- the amount of faculty time available to each learner
- the roles and responsibilities of the learner and the faculty
- resources available and methods of accessing the resources
- hours of operation of the college
- links to other program models
- fees
- time frames for completion
- explanation of the assessment methods
- record keeping and transcription
- the college application process

At Red River Community College, PLAR candidates must meet the same entrance requirements as learners who enrol in the full-time Early Childhood Education Diploma Program (completed Manitoba Grade 12 or equivalent and successfully completed a prescribed reading skills test at a minimum competency level). Learners must be accepted into the Early Childhood Education Program before any PLAR assessments are done.

Orientation #2

Once the initial processes are complete, faculty write a "Student Learning Assessment Agreement," a record of the learner's transfer credit. Faculty invite the learner to a second orientation session which allows them to review the learner's "Student Learning Assessment Agreement." The learner is advised about resource support, hours, time lines, record keeping and transcription. Based on the learner's background, faculty make recommendations about how the learner might best work toward completion of an ECE diploma.

Learners work at their own pace to complete an ECE diploma. A time frame of five years is imposed to be consistent with Red River Community College academic policies.

The ECEPLAR Faculty

Identifying and satisfying the needs of the learner is the responsibility of the ECEPLAR faculty. To be responsive, faculty communicate with learners, design assessment criteria, assess a candidate's application, advise candidates, assess and provide feedback, and maintain records.

Communicate with learners

ECEPLAR faculty are usually the first contact for a learner interested in PLAR. Consequently, faculty have developed an introductory letter, an ECEPLAR procedures manual, an ECEPLAR

learner handbook, orientation presentations, a Student Learning Assessment Agreement and resource letters. Faculty use these tools to market PLAR, provide information in orientation sessions and monitor learner progress.

Design assessment criteria

The Com Pacs used in the full-time diploma program are reviewed by faculty and modified for use by ECEPLAR. The faculty review the learning outcomes expected for each competency and define a series of "measurement techniques" (evaluation criteria) that allow candidates to demonstrate learning. The measurement techniques guarantee a representation of the evaluation methods used in the full-time diploma program. ECEPLAR expectations are defined on a special sheet, attached to the front of each Com Pac. Initially (1983–1995), ECEPLAR learners were expected to demonstrate 80 percent learning for each measurement technique and were given three attempts to do so, consistent with the competency-based model. Since 1995, ECEPLAR learners are given one attempt to prove competence and are expected to achieve 65 percent or C+.

Assess candidate's application

Faculty review the candidate's college application and translate the information onto a Student Learning Assessment Agreement. The agreement details both the credits and the courses a learner is required to complete for both first and second year of the Early Childhood Education Program.

Advise

Faculty meet the candidate and offer information, advice and guidance that enable the learner to set out an action plan to complete an ECE diploma. The learner assumes responsibility for the plan.

ECEPLAR's goal is for each learner to achieve success. Usually, the advisement process helps faculty guide the learner toward the assessment method best suited to the learner's ability or toward a recommendation to earn the credit through actual college attendance.

Assess/provide feedback

During the assessment phase, the faculty use information provided by the learner to measure against a standard defined in the ECEPLAR measurement techniques. Faculty must base the assessment on "outcomes" of what the learner is expected to know once he or she has completed a course, rather than the time, place or method by which learning occurred.

Maintain records and forward to the appropriate office

Faculty track each learner's progress individually. Individual assessment requires efficient monitoring and record-keeping systems. PLAR documentation must be easily accessible,

clear, accurate and up to date. At Red River Community College, a learner's file holds a college application form, transcripts, Student Learning Assessment Agreement, mark records, copies of requests for challenge examinations, skill demonstrations, transfer of credit requests, performance checklists, assignments and portfolio assessments.

Learner Profiles

The following examples illustrate the diversity of the learners who have accessed PLAR processes at Red River Community College.

A

MAVIS was a 50-year-old woman, married with two grown children. She had 20 years' experience in the child care field when she approached Red River Community College for acceptance into ECEPLAR. She had worked as a nursery school teacher in Europe; Montessori assistant school teacher in eastern Canada; director of a day care centre; director of family services at a Canadian Forces Base; community specialist with a Family Support Program; and administrative assistant for a part-time centre. Mavis had a teacher's certificate completed in 1964, two Montessori courses completed in 1975, correspondence courses from both St. Lawrence College and Seneca College, and an Arts degree completed in 1989.

Mavis enrolled in the first year of ECEPLAR in September 1993. At that time, she had to challenge all of the first year of the program in a prescribed manner and only two assessment methods were available to learners; challenge examinations and skill demonstrations, and course equivalency. In the first year of ECEPLAR, there were 36 competencies to be challenged and three skill demonstrations to be completed. Due to the "currency" policy at the college, Mavis was granted transfer credit for only six competencies. She wrote challenge examinations for 30 competencies and completed three skill demonstrations while employed at a 40-hour per week job. Mavis finished the first year of the two-year diploma in June 1995.

During the time Mavis was enrolled in the first year of ECEPLAR, she was also part of a portfolio development pilot course. Having successfully completed the course, when Mavis enrolled in the second year of ECEPLAR in September 1995, she was eligible to use the portfolio assessment method. Typically, completion of the second year took two to three years for a learner who was fully employed. There were 39 competencies and three skill demonstrations to be completed. Mavis was given equivalency for three competencies, wrote challenge examinations for five competencies and was credited for 31 competencies and two skill demonstrations because of the portfolios that she submitted to demonstrate her learning. Mavis completed her diploma in June 1996, less than one year from her second year starting date.

B

LANA was a 35-year-old married woman with three school-aged children living in a small rural community. She had 10 years of early childhood education experience when she enrolled in the ECEPLAR program at Red River Community College. Her experience ranged from "in-home" care, to nursery school teaching, to day care work. Lana began her early childhood education career as a parent board member on the local nursery school board and then operated her own nursery school. Lana was also a very active community member; the creator of a Christian Education Moms and Tots program at her local church; organizer of a combined ages 4-H Club, coordinator for the local skating club, pianist for the junior and senior choir, and crafts director at a church camp.

Lana had also graduated from the specialty program, "Training for Child Care Program 1989 (TCC 89)," which was sponsored by Red River Community College to meet rural training needs in Manitoba. The program covered a group of core subjects necessary to meet the provincial licensing and training requirements at the time and provided its graduates with a "block transfer of credit." The TCC 89 courses were equivalent to those offered in the Early Childhood Education Diploma Program at the college but did not give the learners either a complete first or second year. In 1990, Lana inquired about enrolling in ECEPLAR but found it more cost-effective to complete the first year through Red River Community College's Continuing Education Department.

Lana entered the second year ECEPLAR in November 1992. Like Mavis, she had 39 competencies to challenge and three skill demonstrations to complete. Lana declined the opportunity to be a learner in the portfolio development pilot course at the college. Through the "block transfer of credit" agreement, Lana was given equivalency for eight competencies. She wrote 31 challenge examinations and completed three skill demonstrations over a four-year period. Lana qualified for her diploma in early childhood education in September 1996.

C

APRIL was a 30-year-old woman with two school-aged children. April had 10 years' experience working in a day care centre. When she enrolled in ECEPLAR, she had completed the course work for the first year of the Early Childhood Education Program in Continuing Education. April was blocked from completing first year because she could not enrol in a practicum course in Continuing Education. Her purpose in ECEPLAR was to challenge the practical portion of the first-year program and then to enrol as a full-time learner in the second-year diploma program.

April enrolled in ECEPLAR in May 1996 and completed the first year in June 1996. She was given a transfer of credit for all the theory-based competencies in the first year because they

had been successfully completed in the Continuing Education Program at Red River Community College. ECEPLAR compressed the three first-year practica into a five-day skill demonstration that April successfully completed. She enrolled in the second year of the full-time program and received her diploma in June 1997.

Key Factors in Establishing ECEPLAR at Red River Community College

The Early Childhood Education Program recognized that to create a delivery model with the potential to address the training needs of full- and part-time registrants in both urban and rural populations, a multi-delivery approach had to be developed. ECEPLAR has evolved over 15 years. Credibility has been built through this slow, steady development and integration of PLAR. ECEPLAR has used a systematic approach that has been realistic and achievable. Designated PLAR faculty have built on existing systems and modified the systems over time. The Early Childhood Education Program has allocated research and development time, incorporated principles of PLAR practice, and reviewed assessment pitfalls, cost-effectiveness and transcription. The college has also provided institutional support through the creation of college-wide PLAR policies and procedures.

To begin the ECEPLAR process, faculty committed to the prior learning concept were identified and designated as PLAR. The role of the faculty was to use the full-time program learning outcomes and design credible PLAR assessment processes. Faculty were provided with development opportunities to learn about PLAR. They were expected to be familiar with practices and standards both in early childhood education at the college and in other early childhood education programs, and to understand the links to ECEPLAR and either create or maintain them. ECEPLAR faculty sit on the Early Childhood Education Curriculum Committee, the college PLAR Committee and the Manitoba PLAR Network Committee to fulfil their roles. When designated faculty create and maintain the PLAR systems, the same standards are applied to provide consistency.

ECEPLAR faculty have "learned to do by doing." Initially (1983–1995), ECEPLAR learners applied to Red River Community College and were designated as PLAR students. The learners paid the same fee for both first- and second-year courses. The course of study was prescribed. All the ECEPLAR measurement techniques mirrored the full-time diploma program evaluation techniques. ECEPLAR learners had to be absolutely equal to full-time learners and the only measure of credibility was "to do as the full-time learners did." The first year was broken into three "blocks" and the competencies in each of the blocks mirrored the courses offered in the trimester system of the full-time diploma program. Learners were expected to work sequentially through the blocks. These learners had to challenge the whole first year of the program and then all of the second year to graduate with an ECE diploma. There were only two assessment methods available: assessment of educational documents for

transfer of credit, and challenge processes (examinations and skill demonstrations). This was a case of over-assessment that is typical of fledgling PLAR programs. Now, after much experience, ECEPLAR faculty can interpret learning more easily and measurement techniques, although reflective of the full-time program evaluation criteria, are tailored to the prior learning and recognition learners. The assessment of learning documented in a portfolio has also been added.

Sound assessment is the cornerstone of PLAR. ECEPLAR faculty must adhere to a range of principles of good practice and believe that all assessments should meet five technical requirements.[2]

1. **Validity:** Does the assessment method match what is being assessed? For example, practical skills cannot be tested, they must be demonstrated.

2. **Reliability:** Would a variety of assessors viewing the same evidence make the same judgement?

3. **Sufficiency:** How much evidence is necessary and is a range of assessment techniques used?

4. **Authenticity:** Does the evidence represent the learner's work? Is it honest and accurate?

5. **Currency:** How recent is the evidence?

At Red River Community College, ECEPLAR faculty serve as both advisors and assessors. Faculty must learn the content of every competency in the Early Childhood Education Program. This expectation provides them with in-depth knowledge of the program content and allows them to see the "big picture." With a broader view, ECEPLAR faculty can be more imaginative, creative and flexible with the learners. They can see "grey" versus black and white but still maintain all the principles of good practice: validity, reliability and sufficiency.

Another factor that relates to good practice is fairness. Assessment is not an exact science and because human judgement is involved, there can be pitfalls.[3] This issue of fairness must constantly be addressed. At Red River Community College, most of the ECEPLAR learners are mature, highly motivated and provide evidence of their learning beyond the expectations for a full-time learner. Consequently, there can be a tendency to contrast one ECEPLAR learner to another and expect a standard that is much higher than required to be considered competent in a course. If the learner presents exceptional or, alternatively, insufficient

evidence for the first challenge examination, assignment or interview, the faculty may make assumptions about that learner, a phenomenon that Simosko identifies as "the halo effect." Learners may be judged based on the faculty's background. Those with similar backgrounds may be perceived as more competent. Faculty may have stereotypes about certain types of early childhood education experience or training and these opinions may colour assessments.

Initially (1983–1995), ECEPLAR fees were charged on an annual basis. Because the learners were not "officially" in attendance at the college, the fees were very reasonable (one third of the full-time tuition). The annual fee did not reflect the real cost of the service. Now, fees are charged on a fee per service basis. Fees are based on services performed in the ECEPLAR process, not the amount of credit awarded. Cost recovery had to be built into the fees. Designated ECEPLAR faculty also help to reduce the cost because time spent on PLAR tasks is reduced with exposure.

Successful ECEPLAR results are recorded in the same way in which grades are normally transcribed in the Early Childhood Education Program. Unsuccessful ECEPLAR is not recorded on the college transcripts. PLAR processes are available to learners who have previously challenged a course, provided that the learner waits six months between challenges. Learners enrolled in ECEPLAR may be given up to 75 percent credit in the Early Childhood Education Program. The remaining 25 percent must be earned in actual studies at the college. This has never been an issue in ECEPLAR because of the transferability of credit from one program delivery model to the other.

PLAR has been implemented at the college since the early 1980s. At the time, PLAR was limited to two specialty programs, Early Childhood Education and Nursing. In 1994, it implemented a college-wide PLAR system.

Red River Community College's PLAR policies and procedures provide the framework for the system. These were developed to ensure and support credible PLAR practices in the college. Embedded in the PLAR policies are the procedures, which indicate the processes for the assessment of prior learning. Each program area implements its own PLAR processes within the college policy guidelines to most effectively meet the needs of its learners. The PLAR policies at the college have provided the impetus for review of course delivery and administrative systems that are more learner-centred.

The three most critical factors in ECEPLAR's success have been:

Adopting a competency-based approach to education. The learning outcomes for each competency are standard and clearly defined. This allows the ECEPLAR faculty to develop reliable assessment methods for each of the competencies.

Coordinating all the ECE delivery models at the college (Full-time, Continuing Education, Distance Education and PLAR). This allows learners the flexibility to utilize several delivery models and all of the PLA methods to work toward an ECE diploma.

Articulating with other programs delivering ECE training in Manitoba. This allows learners access to ECE career ladders. The Early Childhood Education Program assigns one and one-half faculty positions to PLAR. ECEPLAR maintains a learner list that fluctuates between 35 and 50 learners. ECEPLAR processes ensure accountability to these adult learners and will continue to be an integral part of the delivery of the Early Childhood Education Program at Red River Community College.

Conclusion

College-equivalent learning is often acquired at work or through volunteering, community involvement, travel, hobbies, self-help manuals and family experiences. Colleges must increasingly meet the needs of learners who are returning to college as mature learners. Re-teaching known materials is a waste of resources, may frustrate learners, adds time and, sometimes, additional costs to the learner's program. PLAR processes that are built into curriculum delivery, and partnerships and articulation with industry, postsecondary institutions and government increase accessibility and are a positive strategy for the recruitment of adult learners.

PLAR is not prescriptive; it is a process of applying flexible assessment services that are accessible, affordable and accountable. Implementing PLA services requires careful consideration and should be done gradually. Because the process is based on the assessment of learning outcomes, it is not unlike the tools and procedures used in any competency-based system but it may not always synchronize with more traditional educational methods.

PLAR is one alternative in postsecondary education. It is ideal for selected individuals because it recognizes learning acquired through a variety of past learning opportunities; both formal study and relevant life and work experience. It acknowledges a different teaching style that can be ideal for mature learners. PLAR continues to evolve, as evidenced from the college's Early Childhood Education Program's 15-year history. Like PLAR candidates, the best learning has come through a combination of education and experience.

Endnotes

1 Blower, 1996

2 Simosko & Cook, 1996

3 Simosko, 1996

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Further Reading

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PART 4

Distance Education

Providing Bridges to Meet the Educational Needs of Early Childhood Educators

by Cheryl Brown-McLean and Joanne Morris

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Abstract

This section outlines the role of distance education in ECCE training. Distance education has been used to deliver college- and university-level programs, including nursing and social work programs. The use of various media (print, audio, video, computers and electronic media) are discussed.

The College of the North Atlantic in St. John's, Newfoundland began a three-year project to train ECE practitioners via distance education. The philosophy in the program was a learner-centred approach. The authors describe the program in terms of curriculum development, entrance procedures, practicum, performance evaluation and other aspects.

They conclude by looking at future directions of distance education in ECCE and the required conditions for successful implementation.

Overview

Some Canadian universities have been delivering distance education programs since the last century,[1] but it is within the last decade that it has increased exponentially. This is due primarily to the rapid growth of communications technology, but also because of the increasing number of students requiring flexible postsecondary study options. For this paper, distance education will be defined as the delivery of instruction where the faculty and students are separated by distance, the distance being bridged through the use of various instructional media.[2] While distance education programs may incorporate some face-to face

sessions (e.g. orientations, institutes, practica), most teaching/learning occurs with students and faculty physically separated.[3] Depending upon the modes of delivery, distance education programs usually provide the student with considerable flexibility in study schedules and self-paced learning.

Historically, most distance education students have been adults, studying part time at significant geographic distance from campus.[4] Today, many researchers have concluded that situational barriers related to work and family commitments are the main factors leading students to choose distance delivery.[5] In today's economy, both single and married students often maintain full- or part-time jobs. At some institutions, this situation has led to significant increases in younger, campus-close students enrolling in distance education courses, which allow more flexibility around work schedules.[6]

Institutions considering implementing distance delivery often face a fundamental question posed by academic administrators and faculty: Is the academic achievement of distance education students equivalent to on-campus students? Research has shown that distance delivery can be as effective as traditional instruction, provided the technologies used are appropriate for instructing the content, there is timely and sufficient faculty–student feedback, and student-to-student interaction.[7] Indeed, as Zirkin and Sumler[8] argued, the degree of interactivity is "an important factor in student achievement, whether in the classroom or through [distance education]." Bickford succinctly pointed out: "The lecture method, as we all know, is hardly the paragon of 'interactive' learning."[9]

To deliver quality distance education services, educational institutions are challenged to make appropriate choices of media to "[meet] the needs of the learner in a manner that is instructionally effective and economically prudent."[10] The financial implications of technology choices are important from the perspective of both the institution and the students, as the costs must be within the means and resources of both parties.

The process of choosing technologies begins with careful research and analysis of course content; desired learning outcomes; student needs, resources and characteristics; and institutional resources. Often, the initial "design stage" is conducted by a team of educators, consisting of faculty, administrators and instructional designers with expertise in distance education. Various technologies are then "matched" to serve different functions in the program. Following are some of the major technologies used in distance education, including a discussion of their strengths and weaknesses.

Print

The original distance education technology, print includes manuals, study guides, textbooks and reference readings. As in the traditional classroom, print remains central to most distance

education. Textbooks and reference readings effectively communicate key theoretical and cognitive concepts. Classroom lectures are often prepared in the form of a course manual, including "self-checks" and quizzes to serve the feedback function of faculty to student questioning in the classroom. Since distance education students usually do not have easy access to reference libraries, a collection of journal articles is often included with the study manual or as a separate resource. This necessitates careful adherence to copyright guidelines.

Print's chief advantages are familiarity to both students and faculty, portability, accessibility, and cost-effectiveness to produce. With today's advances in desktop publishing, virtually any institution can produce high quality print materials, which are also relatively easy to revise. Print's main disadvantage is its lack of interactivity; thus, this technology is usually supplemented by one that facilitates interaction, often audio.

Audio

Audio technologies include the familiar telephone, audiotapes and newer technologies including audio-teleconferencing (also referred to as audioconferencing or teleconferencing). Historically, radio was also used to deliver distance education.

Audio technologies, like print, are easy to use and relatively inexpensive. Their main strength is capacity for interactivity. The telephone still remains a key link between student and faculty for individual questions and academic guidance. Decreasing long distance rates in recent years have further increased the cost-effectiveness of this technology from both the student and institutional perspective.

Audioteleconferencing refers to the use of dedicated telephone systems which provide a two-way link between faculty and students at multiple sites through microphones and speaker boxes. Teleconference sites are usually provincially managed systems located at public buildings such as schools and hospitals. The regular telephone system can also be used for conference calls, but a dedicated teleconference system is more cost-effective and technically superior if linking more than five sites.

Audioteleconferences are often used to link the faculty with students at multiple sites to deliver content material, provide a forum for discussion and an opportunity for students to seek clarification from the faculty. Teleconference systems are easy to use—students merely depress a bar on their microphone set and participants at all other sites will hear their comments.

Some of the cautions around teleconferencing concern length and structuring interactivity. Delivering a three-hour lecture originally designed for the classroom is not effective. It is extremely difficult for students to maintain attention for this period, especially without visual

cues. A one and one-half hour block is preferable, for both learning and teaching, especially if the sessions are not used in combination with audio graphics (see video section below). Sessions should focus on important or problematic aspects of the content. Opportunities for questions and discussion should be specifically structured into teleconference sessions, with adequate pauses for students to reflect and respond. The faculty should also encourage participation by "prompting" response from a site, for example, "What do you think about this issue, Thomasville?" Because audioteleconferences are intended to facilitate interactivity, a maximum class size of 20 to 25 is recommended.[11]

Audioteleconferencing technology is valuable in giving students and faculty some personal contact and providing a forum for spontaneous discussion and immediate response to learning queries. It is not a good mode for lengthy delivery of complex content, or conveying visual material or manipulative skills. Thus, it is often combined with print or video technology to adequately meet the learning objectives.

Passive forms of audio technology such as audiotapes can be effective for conveying audio-specific material, such as music or language.

Video

Videotapes

The most commonly used video technology is videotapes, either commercially produced products that complement the content or in-house, custom-produced videotapes. Commercial educational videotapes come in a wide price range from about $100 to $500 each. They also have a wide range of copy restrictions, ranging from no copying to unlimited reproduction. These factors must be taken into consideration before selecting commercial products.

Custom-produced videos solve the course relevancy and ownership problems, but require significant resources to produce. Likewise, they are comparatively expensive to revise. Video resources are valuable in illustrating visual material, manipulative skills and interpersonal skills. Videotape technology is also user friendly and highly accessible for students.

Audiographics

Audiographics is a visual option that may be used in combination with audio-teleconferencing technology. Often called "the electronic blackboard," a telewriter tablet that looks like an Etch-a-sketch™ allows either the faculty or student to draw graphics (or to use pre-prepared screens), which are projected on television monitors at participating sites. Essentially, this technology is used to convey the same types of materials as would be illustrated on a blackboard or overhead projector—headings, key points and diagrams. It has been proven very effective in teaching high school mathematics, whereby the teacher

demonstrates and students solve math equations using this technology in combination with audioteleconferencing and standard textbooks.[12]

Interactive videoconferencing

Interactive videoconferencing, sometimes referred to as live, interactive video, refers to live instruction via television, distributed by satellite, compressed video and/or cable. It includes either one-way (student views instructor) or two-way video and always includes two-way audio. Faculty can hear and respond to student questions from distant sites, and may be able to see students as well. Like standard television productions, videoconferencing also has the capacity to incorporate still graphics and illustrative video clips.

The incorporation of audio and video is more engaging for the student than straight audio. However, it is an expensive technology to produce; thus, it is used primarily by large distance education institutions. Sometimes, interactive video is delivered to relatively large numbers of students thereby reducing its interactivity.

Computers and Electronic Media

Computers and electronic media have provided the avenue for the rapid expansion of distance education in the past decade. Their versatility enables a myriad of educational applications to serve both local and global student populations.

Some of the most ubiquitous technologies used in current distance education are the facsimile (fax) and electronic mail (e-mail). Faxes are readily accessible to faculty and students, and are a relatively inexpensive form of communication. They are commonly used for submitting assignments and providing feedback on assignments.

E-mail is a method of sending messages to another computer user or group of users. It is common in most workplaces and many homes. E-mail provides a flexible option for students to ask faculty questions and to receive feedback and academic guidance. While the feedback is usually not immediate, questions can be posed literally in the middle of the night, if that is when the student happens to be engaged in study. Faculty can also use this tool to send the same message to the entire class simultaneously.

Computer-assisted instruction uses the computer as a self-contained instructional tool to present individual lessons or courses. CD-ROM is now used as a tool to present print, sound, still pictures and moving graphics via computer. CD-ROMs also have the capacity to have links to a website.

Computer-managed instruction uses a computer program to organize instruction and maintain academic records and track student progress. This is often used in combination with computer-assisted instruction.

Computer-mediated communication, also known as computer conferencing, is one of the fastest growing modes of distance education. It employs networked computers which allow the faculty and students to create shared text messages and responses, including a permanent record of all group discussion. The main advantages of computer-mediated conferencing are that most of the communication is generated by students,[13] and students who are normally more passive and less vocal in traditional classrooms tend to participate more.[14]

Computer-mediated conferencing entails new dynamics of communication that usually require an adjustment period for both students and faculty. Most significantly, more time is needed to communicate via computer than face to face, because typing-reading takes more time than speaking-listening.[15] As it is a new technology, many computer-mediated courses have been plagued with technical problems, which have led to student frustration and possible academic failure or withdrawal.[16] Distance educators using this technology recommend strong technical support for both faculty and students before embarking on this mode of delivery.[17]

The Internet is a global network of more than four million personal computers, large-scale mainframe computers and high-speed supercomputers which contain text, graphics, sound and video information.[18] The World Wide Web (WWW) is a tool which links the different computer hardware and software comprising the Internet, and provides a standardized means of accessing information for all users. This network has created a limitless opportunity to create and distribute courseware. A course "Home page" can include course outlines, faculty e-mail addresses, links to the course's computer conferencing discussion groups, lecture notes, assignments and tests. It can also include a listing of reference materials, including information that can be accessed directly through the WWW.

Distance education has been used successfully to deliver college- and university-level programs in many disciplines, including the human sciences. Nursing and social work programs are commonly delivered by distance education. Grant McEwan Community College has been delivering several nursing programs for over a decade. Human sciences programs delivered by distance education often employ institutes or practica to teach and evaluate interpersonal or clinical skills.[19] If used appropriately, some technologies can even enhance face-to-face teaching. Naidu and Oliver[20] found that nursing students using computer-mediated conferencing for case study analysis demonstrated reflective critical analysis and collaborative problem-solving skills which prepared them for decision making on the job.

Once the program design and media selection phases have been accomplished, mechanisms must be established for ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the media. Student as well as faculty perspectives must be taken into account in evaluation of the effectiveness of all media used in the delivery of distance education. Student issues include accessibility,

orientation to technology, personal learning styles, ease of technology usage and educational outcomes. Faculty need to evaluate technologies with respect to the effectiveness of communication with students, presentation of content, maintaining currency of resource information, evaluation procedures, ease of use and time demands. Communication effectiveness also needs to be assessed: Is it personal and meaningful? Does the technology support and encourage reflective thinking in students? Is interactivity enhanced? Student and faculty course evaluation data and recommendations are used to shape revisions to distance education programs.

The growth of new communications technologies has opened doors to meet the learning needs of working and geographically distant students who cannot attend on-campus courses. They may also provide a viable educational option for students with family responsibilities or those who prefer self-paced study. To be effective, the program design must employ technologies that best meet learning needs in terms of content, faculty–student interaction, student–student interaction and match the resources of both the student and the institution.

Case Study in Distance Learning

Background

Over the years, it has been difficult for early childhood educators in Newfoundland to access training. There are two main barriers: its relatively large geographic region and the distribution of the population. Except for two urban areas on the island, the province consists of rural and isolated communities. In 1990, comprehensive certificate and diploma courses were available only in the urban areas of St. John's and Corner Brook.

Before 1982, there was no requirement for training in legislation. The passing of the Day Care and Homemaker Services Regulations (1982) required training for early childhood educators, and led to the first full-time offerings at the one-year certificate level. In 1986, the provincial college began to offer diploma-level training in St. John's, and later in Corner Brook, Labrador and Springdale (central Newfoundland). Due partially to small population bases, full-time offerings have been reduced to two locations. Part-time evening courses no longer exist in the province partially due to their cost-recovery nature.

As a result of recommendations of the advisory committee to the full-time program, the College of the North Atlantic in St. John's partnered with the provincial government to access federal government funding under the Child Care Initiatives Fund to address the training needs of currently employed early childhood education practitioners. Beginning in 1991, the three-year project had the following objectives:

- to develop a certification model and implementation strategy which would outline training requirements and the process for meeting requirements;
- to develop the existing provincial curriculum for the Diploma in Applied Arts in Early Childhood Education into a distance education delivery format; and
- to develop a prior learning assessment (PLA) mechanism that would outline the process to recognize the knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired through work, life experiences and previous training which could be applied to certification levels or credits in the diploma program.

The underlying goal was to improve the quality of child care in the province by increasing professional and public awareness of the importance of early childhood education professional skills and knowledge, and to provide an avenue for practising early childhood educators to acquire appropriate certification and training. The pilot project was successfully completed in 1994 and the college continues to offer the training through distance education.

The Distance Program

The Philosophy

The distance program is structured around learning outcomes and is delivered with the philosophy of a learner-centred approach. It acknowledges that learning is motivated from within an individual who has an inherent desire to succeed. The outcomes-based framework for this program supports an emphasis on evaluation through observation to determine how well a person is able to apply the knowledge/information/skills that are mastered within real-world role performance. The learner-centred approach provides learning activities that facilitate progress and learning toward performance outcomes that are related to early childhood education standards of practice. The emphasis is on the integration of knowledge (content), skills and dispositions which are required in the complex applications necessary to work effectively with children and families in a community-based setting. It has been developed with the acknowledgment of the principles of facilitation of learning, accessibility, equity and accountability.

Traditional values and beliefs about college-level education in Canada stem from influences and demands of the industrial age where education was seen as largely dedicated to serving the needs of industry and providing workers to fill stable jobs within occupational areas. Behavioural psychology led to the assumption that people who were exposed to similar learning environments and conditions would consistently master almost the same learning at the end, and that learning may be measured by observing changes in behaviour. Developmental psychology has contributed to a shift in the view of education by emphasizing the individual nature of learning; personal learning styles; the influence of internal

motivations and drives; and the complex interplay of emotional, perceptual and cognitive responses to problems. Cognitive science has contributed a wealth of new knowledge about how the brain functions, about the internal structural changes that occur as a factor of learning, and about the role of the individual learner in constructing his or her own learning by finding meaning in new experiences that fit with what is already known. Learning results from active interaction with the environment, which provides a "real-life" challenge that calls for the integration of knowledge, skills and appropriate attitudes or values.[21] The distance program provides a variety of learning opportunities that recognize the developmental and cognitive principles of adult learning and the integration of education and practice.

Curriculum Development

With the involvement of a provincial advisory committee of community and college representatives as well as faculty, the program has been developed around the following eight general learning outcomes that provide the framework for delivery:

1. Apply Theories of Child Development
2. Develop the Children's Environment
3. Promote the Safety and Well-being of Children
4. Provide Developmentally Appropriate Activities
5. Interact with Children
6. Interact with Families
7. Assist in Administration
8. Conduct Oneself Professionally

Within this framework, there are 30 modules containing the content of the courses. They are written so that students can obtain their knowledge base through individualized, self-study materials which are supported by faculty tutorials, teleconference seminars, videos, audiotapes and multimedia technology using a CD-ROM linked to a Website. Three-week institutes on-site at the college's demonstration children's centre provide the practicum experience and group interaction opportunities. An extension of performance evaluation is also carried out during faculty visits to the student's place of employment. Faculty prepare all materials, make ongoing revisions to course content, maintain currency of the resource readings and facilitate the students' achievement of learning outcomes.

Entrance Procedure

Students are required to have high school completion or equivalency and two years of work experience in early childhood settings. To increase accessibility and better meet the demand from students on the waiting list, the two years of experience will no longer be required in the upcoming intake. To begin communication with students who are intending study through distance education, a written questionnaire about their goals and experience is completed and telephone contact is made to provide information about the program and explain the need for access to a child care centre for practical assignments and observations. Discussion about the applicability of prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) initiates the students' learning plans with portfolio development, an institute or course work.

PLAR for the Distance Student

Students who have at least two years of work experience in early childhood settings are eligible to pursue prior learning credits through the submission of a portfolio. They spend the first semester of the program following a self-study course manual with readings, guidelines and examples. There are also teleconference seminars one night a week for 10 weeks during which faculty guide students through the process of developing a portfolio. Faculty are also available to students by telephone for questions, advice or clarification. The college is currently preparing a CD-ROM linked to a Website for delivery of the portfolio process. A completed portfolio provides a descriptive account of the student's learning experiences which derive from work, life and training experiences, supported by documentation that helps to verify that their practices demonstrate the knowledge, skills and attitudes required for performance in the field. In addition to portfolio assessment, faculty may choose to include telephone or in-person interviews, challenge exams invigilated at community college and school sites throughout the province and observations of performance during on-site institutes. These forms of evaluation are referenced to the learning outcomes for the program and the units of learning within. After the assessment, students begin their diploma program at the level most appropriate for them, as outlined on a learning plan.

Individualized Education Plan

An Individualized Education Plan (IEP) provides a contractual framework for the program. It documents transfer of credits from accredited educational institutions with approved curriculum, as well as PLA credits, and outlines the courses and performance evaluations required to complete the diploma program. On a course-by-course basis, it can be difficult to maintain a clear conceptual framework of the overall program. The IEP presents an integrated "picture" of the diploma program and outlines the courses that students may choose from to meet their own needs at that point in time. Self-direction encourages students to continually reflect on their practices with young children and identify their learning goals. While they are working, facing real-life situations, it is important that they have the opportunity to access the

learning that can be acquired through a course such as Guiding Children or Planning the Curriculum, according to their own needs, interests and preferences. Faculty are responsible for ensuring that prerequisite learning is in place for students to pursue their course selections. This self-directed learning experience has the benefit of strengthening the students' developing early childhood education philosophy about developmentally appropriate approaches for working with young children.

Course Work

Students who study through distance education benefit from having an individualized program while being part of a group. They begin their studies either as members of a group registered for a course in Psychology or by attending a three-week institute. The course experience involves weekly teleconference seminars and assists students in becoming familiar with other students and the faculty through audio contact. This course is followed by attendance at the first scheduled institute. The institute experience provides even greater benefits to students because they meet the faculty and other students in person and work as a group from the start. For some students, going from teleconference contact to the institute gives them a balanced sense of the two program delivery aspects. On the other hand, starting the program as a group member in an institute helps some students pursue subsequent courses with a better understanding of the framework and expectations of the program.

After course selections have been made, students receive by mail or courier a package that includes the course manual, copyrighted resource readings, textbooks, evaluation procedures and faculty contact information. The course manual outlines the rationale for the course, the specific learning outcomes, the learning activities and resources. Students begin the course by reviewing the designated resource materials for each learning outcome. When they feel confident that they understand the theoretical content for each outcome, there are self-checks or review questions with an answer key provided. Students are able to check their own learning and contact their course faculty for clarification, questions or discussion before proceeding to the next section. There are written assignments for each of the learning outcomes which are a combination of theory-based and practical application. Students must have access to a child care centre or family day home to complete observation assignments and to implement program activities with children. Some learning activities include content on audiotapes and videotapes. When students are ready, they request them from the college and are responsible for returning them within 10 days. Students work through the readings and resource materials for each outcome and submit assignments by mail, fax or in person. A schedule of due dates for assignments and tests is agreed upon by faculty and students. Faculty provide extensive written feedback to the students, sometimes reaffirming their knowledge, and also to pose questions for critical thinking or prompting students to take their work further.

When course work has been completed, students contact the college for the time and location of exams, which are invigilated in communities through schools and college sites. Students and invigilator are matched for suitable times, most often in the evening. Test results are sent by mail to students and faculty are available to review exams on an individual basis by telephone. Performance evaluations are scheduled for institutes and field visits.

All courses have assigned faculty time. This is used in a variety of ways depending on the course and the students registered. Primarily theoretical courses may have regular weekly teleconferences, while more practical ones may be taught during institute workshops. Students are observed and evaluated during practicum placements and their workplaces. Discussions are held with the students to review the student's self-evaluation and the faculty's observations. Students can access teleconference sites in their own community schools or nearest college location. Faculty may choose to hold small group discussion by telephone if they deem it beneficial to the students. The small group interaction encourages individuals to participate comfortably. One-on-one tutorials with faculty provide the individual contact necessary to meet the individual learner's needs and answer questions. Faculty select the most appropriate contact times based on faculty and student needs. Some may choose two evenings a week while others may be available to students seven days a week during daytime and evening hours. The total contact time with students varies with course content and students' needs.

Multimedia Technology

Various forms of technology are incorporated into the delivery of the program via distance education. A current project has involved the selection of one course to be piloted through a CD-ROM linked to a Website, with the goals of increasing accessibility for learners and making the learning more interactive than print materials can offer. The CD-ROM has video, graphics and sound capability. More readily available technology is being investigated for use, including e-mail for faculty contact and submission of assignments. E-mail may also increase the student-to-student contact through problem-solving approaches to case studies and peer study groups. Availability of Internet access through the fibre optic network and the increase of homes with computers has facilitated this opportunity. These developments are currently in progress and piloting is scheduled for 1998.

The program incorporates weekly teleconferencing for some courses. These sessions are audio-taped in case students are unable to attend because of bad weather or illness. The audiographics system is sometimes used for outlining topics, and has also facilitated the teaching of bookkeeping in the program. As with all media, teleconferencing should be used as an enabler for learning, not as the predominant method. Teleconferences can help students feel connected, but many students prefer to manage their studies on their own time, which is one reason they chose distance education.

Practicum

Students participate in three-week institutes three times during their studies. These institutes take place at the college's demonstration children's centre, and offer an immersion experience in developmentally appropriate practice. Students gain a combination of practical course work, interaction with children, and planning and implementation of the curriculum. They develop their individual goals for this period with guidance from the faculty in relation to their IEO. Course work is selected as it relates to fieldwork experience, such as in observation of children's development, interpersonal communications, art and creativity, play, music, and guiding children. Interaction with children takes place during scheduled time in the playrooms. Students get to know and understand individual children, become familiar with the routines and the dynamics of the group, and observe the staff modelling guidance strategies. Students participate with staff in planning the curriculum based on observed children's interests, needs and preferences. They then take responsibility for preparation of various children's activities which they implement and evaluate. Demonstration centre staff are assigned to act as partners for the students, providing guidance, feedback, support and role modelling. They meet daily to talk and written feedback is also provided to the student.

Program faculty determined that institutes are necessary for the integration of distance education students' learning across subject disciplines, and a synthesis of child development theory with practice. This on-site experience addresses such problems as possible fragmentation of learning. Rather than a series of individual courses, students realize that learning outcomes of the program are focussed toward the moral, ethical and professional standards of early childhood education. The immersion experience provides the real-life example of developmentally appropriate, child-centred environments for young children. Students' experiences are designed for transference of the learning to their own places of employment and communities. The group work facilitates the acquisition of interpersonal skills with children and adults. Reflective thinking about experiences related to both personal and professional development is encouraged through guided journal writing, and conferencing with faculty and centre staff. Faculty regularly observe and provide opportunities for discussion. Evaluation processes, including self-evaluation, are integrated into various components of the practicum.

Performance Evaluations

Consistent with the outcomes-based framework for this program, an important component of the evaluation of learning is observing the individual's ability to transfer the knowledge, skills and attitudes that are mastered within practicum settings to many other experiences. Faculty make periodic visits to students' workplace settings in child care. This provides the opportunity to observe students in their practices on a day-to-day basis and can increase validity of the evaluation for learning outcomes related to interaction with children and

parents, administration responsibilities and professionalism. Students are more relaxed and confident with their responsibilities in familiar environments, and faculty can assess whether they have transferred the knowledge attained in the program and practicum experiences to the child care settings.

Before the visit, goals are discussed in relation to the IEP. Students receive the observation form in advance so they can reflect on their own performance and prepare for discussion with faculty. The outcome of this process becomes part of the field work evaluation.

Adaptability of Offerings

Most students study the program through distance education on a part-time basis. The college is currently involved in a special delivery contract to provide the ECE program on a full-time basis to a group of students at the Miawpukek, Conne River, MicMac Territory in Newfoundland. As part of their community's strategic planning, there was an identified need for people working with children in a variety of settings to access ECE training. Students are relieved from some of their work responsibilities so they can continue their education. They meet in a conference room for three-hour teleconference sessions twice a week. During these sessions, the faculty and students communicate through telephones with speaker boxes. This facilitates communication and spontaneous questions and comments from students. Faculty divide these sessions into 45-minute blocks during which three subject areas are reviewed. Discussion on content, clarification of expectations, and students' own relevant life experiences are shared at this time. Review and preparation for exams are also provided.

Resources and principles from *Clams for the Next Generations*,[22] a curriculum developed by the MicMac Maliseet Child Care Council of New Brunswick, are being integrated. To strengthen the opportunity for input and relevance to the community and culture, the faculty divide institute time equally between the college's demonstration centre and the Four Winds Child Care Centre at Miawpukek Health and Social Services in Conne River. Individual tutorials facilitate the students with their work in each of the courses and are focussed on applying theory into their work at the child care centre. This one-on-one contact supports individual learning needs and styles and increases the mutually supportive relationship between students and faculty. Much work is yet to be done to reflect the adaptations formally into the curriculum content. Evaluation will help to inform this process.

Conclusion and Future Directions

The Diploma in Applied Arts in Early Childhood Education prepares graduates to work in the human and social service sectors. When offered through distance learning methodologies, there are many considerations to ensure that students are well prepared to perform in a highly skilled manner in a complex work environment. It is necessary to support program delivery with faculty who have sound knowledge and experience in early childhood education and

adult learning principles. In addition, they must have knowledge about using a variety of media to support the self-directed learner. Students who are practitioners can combine their work and their education effectively.

The outcomes-based approach supports the learners as central to the learning experiences. The variety of methods used in distance delivery allows them to draw from many sources and in differing ways to meet their learning styles. Practicum and workplace performance evaluations are the opportunities for integration and synthesis of learning for application in a variety of settings.

One future consideration is to explore ways to build mentor relationships with qualified individuals in students' own communities for more effective and regular support. This would facilitate greater encouragement of reflective thinking, more frequent and accessible communication and observation. Journal writing could be extended to include the period between institutes. A current pilot project being carried out jointly in Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and Ontario will provide valuable information for the exploration of possible directions.

An international partnership with Northern College in Aberdeen and Dundee, Scotland has resulted in a contract to share course material for curriculum development purposes and resource readings for their students. Graduates of the College of the North Atlantic receive two years, advanced standing toward Northern College's Bachelor of Arts in Early Childhood Studies, and can access it through distance learning. This agreement facilitates continuing of education and career laddering for distance students for whom accessibility is an issue.

Delivery of the program through distance methodologies requires ongoing curriculum assessment and refinement. As the provincial curriculum evolves with respect to more emphasis on anti-bias and diversity issues, children with special needs and infant–toddler care, the distance program will reflect these changes from ongoing curriculum revisions.

Conditions Necessary for Successful Implementation

All educational institutions are challenged to define their mandate and allocate resources appropriately to provide quality education to meet the needs of the communities they serve. Educational institutions that serve rural and remote populations are particularly challenged on the issue of accessibility.

In the late 1980s, the College of the North Atlantic was faced with a major challenge regarding ECE training. It had a newly established two-year diploma program which the

community advisory committee deemed was providing quality graduates. However, the committee stated that there was a critical need to extend educational services to those who had entered practice before the mid-1980s when there were no early childhood programs offered by the provincial college system or the university. To address this need, considerable funds would be needed to provide either off-campus part-time programs or distance education. If off-campus delivery were chosen, a significant number of early childhood practitioners would still be discriminated against due to their lack of proximity to urban centres, and thus distance education was chosen as the most desirable option.

The federal Child Care Initiatives Fund provided the opportunity to address this critical need without diverting resources from full-time programs or charging prohibitive fees to distance education students. The college made an informed, ethical choice to embark upon distance education, dedicating Child Care Initiatives funding to a comprehensive three-year program development process, which specifically addressed the designated learning outcomes and learning needs of practising early childhood educators. To have ignored the call to provide distance education would have virtually denied the opportunity for postsecondary education to a generation of practitioners, which also had long-term implications for the quality of care received by children. In effect, there would be a lack of equity experienced by both caregivers and children.

The development and delivery of quality distance education programs require considerable resources; they are not and should not be a profit-motivated venture. Given an ethical motive and adequate resources, distance education can be an effective response to issues of accessibility and equity facing postsecondary institutions.

Accountability

Issues arise from a variety of perspectives in distance education. A starting point is to acknowledge that all education must meet approved standards, otherwise the learner stands to suffer in many ways. This is an important accountability issue that must be an integral part of any distance offerings. Employers expect performance to be at college level in the workplace, and the 1990's graduates of postsecondary training are expected to function at more complex and higher levels than before. At the College of the North Atlantic, the required learning outcomes are equivalent between distance students and on-campus students. This equivalency standard ensures that graduates will be prepared to meet the standards of practice for the field of study.

Accessibility

Many postsecondary learners are attempting to manage work and family responsibilities as well as their studies; thus, accessibility becomes a major issue. Distance education can help learners meet these demands by providing some flexibility in their study time and methods.

Many of those accessing distance learning are mature learners who combine work experience and education for meaningful advancement of their knowledge base and practical skills.

While distance education increases access for many learners, media can be problematic. Print material does not always sustain attention. Electronic communication does not always provide the personal level of discussion that would be desirable. Lack of immediate access to faculty can be frustrating. It is important to deliver programs through a variety of media to increase learner attention and to "bring alive" the material. This permits students to draw from a variety of resources to suit their learning style. When this need is met, students tend to be more self-directed.

Orientation to Technology

Orientation and training to use various technology maximizes the benefits of learning resources for the students and prepares faculty to be innovative and effective in their delivery approaches. Like the acquisition of any new skill, it takes a while to become competent. For faculty, sufficient training in the use of technologies must be provided for them to be knowledgeable and skilful in its application for both program development and delivery. Students who are more reserved than others take longer to feel comfortable. When orienting students to teleconferencing, gentle prompting by the faculty to have students convey their own experiences related to the content helps students to overcome hesitations in using the technology. Other students take very little time to adjust and contribute frequently to the discussion with personal stories, examples and questions. It should be noted that students demonstrate varying degrees of participation in the classroom as well; thus, it is not necessarily the technology that causes inhibition. Some students prefer to learn by listening and observing rather than contributing to discussion. As in the classroom, it is the faculty's responsibility to create a comfortable learning environment where all students feel welcome to contribute.

On-Site Practica

Some disciplines, early childhood education being one, are applied sciences and therefore mechanisms must be put into place so students can participate in meaningful practicum experience. This opportunity facilitates students' integration of knowledge, skills and attitudes through interpersonal interaction with peers, faculty, children and professional role models. It is important to maximize the effectiveness of practica by selecting course topics that require face-to-face interaction and immediate feedback during the learning process. For example, art and music are creative activities with which adults need to have hands-on and group experience so they can plan effectively for children's experiences. The course in interpersonal communication is dynamic and interactive, involving individual and group

activities. Faculty and student interaction can facilitate the planning of individualized learning. The on-site practicum also provides for a learning experience that becomes transferable to the learner's place of employment or to enhance career opportunities in early childhood care and education.

Isolation

Some researchers argue that distance education increases the isolation already felt by many individuals and lacks opportunity for peers to interact regularly and learn from one another. This is an important consideration for early childhood education. The case study demonstrates examples of how faculty–student and peer interaction can be enhanced through institutes, workplace assignments, teleconference sessions and small group tutorials. Also, if students are employed they are already experiencing interaction in real-world settings. It may be argued that rural and remote students seek out distance education as a means of developing professionally and connecting with peers, where few such opportunities exist in their home communities.

Faculty Assignment

Faculty assignment can be challenging for institutions when they make the transition from traditionally offered programs to extending these offerings through distance learning methodologies. Faculty need orientation and training in delivering distance education to meet individual learner's needs and to ensure integration of knowledge. Adequate faculty time must be allowed to prepare learning resources, and to plan and coordinate the delivery to ensure the integrity of the program and students' attainment of outcomes. Student contact time is difficult to quantify. In comparison to full-time offerings where faculty instruct a group of students at a set time, faculty who interact with students who study through distance interact primarily on a one-to-one basis. Students vary considerably with the amount of contact time needed to complete their studies and field work components of the program.

Structure

Course and program completion parameters are other issues that arise. Part-time learners take longer to complete their studies than those who study on a full-time basis. Students who learn through distance programs are more apt to be self-paced. Although difficult from the institution's perspective of tracking and administration, it is a relevant consideration of the individualization of adult learning. A key principle of adult education is that adult learners have multiple roles—worker, spouse, parent—which should be recognized, respected and, if possible, built upon to enhance the learning process. Distance education itself is a recognition of the needs of adult learners, and often distance education program design,

institutional policy and learner supports are further tailored to meet the needs of adult learners.[23] Within reasonable parameters, self-pacing is part of self-direction, and with appropriate guidance and flexibility within course target dates, students should be able to move more quickly or allowed more time as their own circumstances demand. The experience of the provincial college in Newfoundland was that open-ended self-pacing was not desirable in many ways. Distance education requires students to be very self-disciplined in completing their studies, and without due dates for assignments and tests, many students were unable to complete course requirements. Upon students' recommendations expressed through a program evaluation survey, due dates were implemented. On the other hand, rigid structures will discourage adult learners who have chosen distance education to manage their studies around work and family responsibilities. For a two-year diploma, students might need four to five years to complete the requirements.

Equity

Part-time learners, including students who study through distance, are often not considered in regular student services of a college, such as counselling, remedial assistance, libraries, computer services and career advice. These services often fall on the faculty who deliver the programs and who may not have the time and requisite background necessary to meet students' needs. Student-to-student contact is an important consideration in learning and working in early childhood care and education and, therefore, distance learning should regularly include interactive opportunities. It may also be difficult for family members to recognize that a student who studies from home needs blocks of uninterrupted time within the family schedule. For these students to succeed requires motivation, self-direction and long-term commitment.

Distance education is not new but it is an area in education experiencing tremendous growth. In many respects, it meets the needs of adult learners and increases accessibility to education. Institutions considering the offering of early childhood education through distance methodologies need to ensure that students receive high quality learning opportunities.

Endnotes

1. Queen's University began delivering credit courses from its Faculty of Arts and Sciences in 1889.
2. Some educational institutions serve geographically distinct student populations by faculty who travel to off-campus sites to deliver courses. Such delivery methods are not normally classified as distance education since they are essentially replicating classroom methodologies in a distant site.
3. Carr, Fullerton, Severino et al., 1996; Gottschalk, 1996a; Miller & Husmann, 1996; Wiesenberg & Hutton, 1996.
4. Wallace, 1996.
5. Heinze, 1987 & van Enckeunt, 1986, cited in Wallace, 1996.
6. Wallace, 1996.
7. Moore & Thompson, 1990 and Verduin & Clark, 1991, cited in Gottschalk, 1996a; Dillon & Walsh, 1992 and Dunning, Van Kekerix & Zaborowski, 1993, cited in Olcott, 1996.
8. Zirkin & Sumler, 1995.
9. Bickford, cited in Zirkin & Sumler, 1995.
10. Gottschalk, 1996a, p. 2.
11. Pers. comm., TETRA, Memorial University of Newfoundland.
12. Ryan, 1996.
13. Ross, Crane & Robertson, 1995.
14. Wiesenberg & Hutton, 1996.
15. Ibid.
16. Cragg, 1994, cited in Carr, Fullerton, Severino et al., 1996; Wiesenberg & Hutton, 1996.
17. Ross, Crane & Robertson, 1995; Wiesenberg & Hutton, 1996.
18. Gottschalk, 1996b.
19. Carr, Fullerton, Severino et al., 1996.
20. Naidu & Oliver, 1996.
21. Shipley, 1995.
22. Child Care Training Review Committee, MicMac Maliseet Child Care Council of New Brunswick,1995.
23. Garland, 1994; Wallace, 1996.

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PART 5

Practicum in Early Childhood Care and Education Training

by Judy Pollard

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Abstract

This section discusses the role of practicum in ECCE training. Practicum has a dual-purpose role: to socialize students and give them real-world experience.

The four key elements for successful practicum experiences are outlined. The strengths and weaknesses of two models of supervision are also assessed: a triadic approach includes the student, sponsor educator and program; a dyadic model includes only the sponsor educator and the student. Other models described are the tri-level, contextual and collaborative models. A case study of two pairs of ECE students based on the triadic model of practicum is described. Based on the experience of these cases, Pollard discusses some issues and conditions related to student success in the practicum experience. Strategies and solutions that address issues inherent in practicum are also presented.

Description of Practicum

The practicum component of the preparation of early childhood educators is the most complex and least clearly defined aspect of the training. It occurs in several forms, from a day or two per week to blocks of several weeks. "...whatever way we call it and whatever way it is organized, practicum is seen by most students, most people in the field and most lecturers concerned with practicum, as the most important part of the course."[1] With this strong sense of the significance of practicum, it is imperative that its effectiveness be maximized, and that efforts be made to incorporate information that has been gleaned from studies in the field.

During practicum experiences, students work within community early childhood services side by side with agency staff who serve as models for practice and to whom the student is responsible. During the practicum, the ECCE student integrates and consolidates theoretical

and practical learning and demonstrates the ability to undertake the role and responsibilities of the early childhood educator.

The practicum serves a dual purpose in the training of people in the human services:

> ...to socialise students in training into their chosen profession and to provide first-hand experience of the "real world" in which the student can acquire the relevant skills under the supervision of an experienced expert in the field.... It is becoming increasingly obvious, that for the neophyte teacher or child care worker, it is not sufficient solely to use practicum time to practise and enhance the technical skills of helping children learn and managing them in a group setting, in other words concentrating on teaching as a science. It is equally important to use the time to actively work towards enhancing personal skills and interpersonal relationships and ensure that students learn teaching as an art.[2]

This combination of "teaching as an art" with "teaching as a science" will develop in early childhood educators the ability to be managers, advocates and educators, and take on other adaptive roles in response to societal changes.

Towards Excellence in ECCE Training Programs[3] notes the goals of professional practice (practicum) as including opportunities for the student to:

- observe exemplary models in a variety of ECCE settings;
- implement acquired knowledge, skills and attitudes in supportive environments;
- analyse field experiences through reflection, self-assessment and feedback from ECCE professionals; and
- synthesize the practical and theoretical elements of one's learning (p. 9).

It is suggested that the core element of practicum activities be professional practice. In light of this focus, students in practicum are prompted to:

- examine existing practices critically, in light of their theoretical knowledge; and
- engage in observation, reflective thinking, teamwork, interpersonal skills, technical skills, independent learning, and oral and written communication.[4]

Individuals directly involved in a practicum experience are the ECE student, a sponsor educator who is an early childhood educator and designated staff person in the early childhood setting (practicum site), and an instructor from the training institution. Effective practicum experiences are thought to be composed of four key elements:

- clear communication between the student, program instructor/training institution, and sponsor educator;
- appropriate feedback;
- observation skills as an objective of practicum; and
- clearly defined roles of practicum participants.[5]

Practicum may take several forms: an extended single placement situated toward the end of the training program; multiple, shorter block placements usually distributed throughout the training program; or concurrent, part-time placements up to three full days per week extending over a semester or year. Concurrent, part-time placements provide greater opportunity for integration of theoretical and workplace learning.

Approaches to Practicum Supervision

Supervision of the student in ECE practicum is of great importance in relation to the student's ability to translate theory into practice. "Surveys of students and graduates have shown that the quality of supervision the student receives in the workplace is usually the most important factor in determining the quality of the experience."[6] Four thematic clusters integral to effective supervision within the practicum have been identified as ability to develop teaching skills; communication; improvement of preservice student's teaching; and cognitive understanding.[7] The degree of skill in supervision varies with the sponsor educators who are supervising the students. "Limitations of supervisors are numerous and include poorly defined roles, tentative relationship with cooperating teachers, lack of training, scholarly commitments, lack of longevity, and insufficient time spent with preservice teachers."[8]

Several terms are used to refer to the agency staff who work with the student in the child care setting during the practicum, such as "sponsor educator," "practicum supervisor," "sponsor teacher" and "cooperating teacher." The term chosen for use in this document is sponsor educator, which implies a supportive, facilitative and guiding relationship, intended to enhance the personal growth of the student.

Researchers have developed models of supervision of students in ECE practicum to try to define the supervisory process within practicum. Each of the four models presented is briefly discussed.

Triadic Model

In the "triadic model" of practicum, the student, sponsor educator and program have distinct roles.[9] Because all three are involved in an assessment process to determine the student's progress and competency level, students are supported to monitor their own learning process.

Weaknesses of the triadic model have been identified by Kellar and Grossman[10] as being: heavy workloads and scholarly pursuits of program instructors may impact the quality of supervision they can provide; and a tendency to redefine the role of the program instructor within the triadic relationship to accommodate the program and instructor's busy schedule, rather than to explore new models of effective supervision.

An alternative "dyadic" model of practicum supervision, involving only sponsor educators and students, may be necessary given declining resources in training programs. Factors such as financial constraints are increasing, and the dominance of the student, sponsor educator and instructor triad is of concern. The supervisory role of the sponsor educator might be expanded through specific training and the role of the instructor eliminated. Implications for this alternative approach include the need for greater preparation and support for sponsor educators.

Tri-level Model

At the University of Tennessee, an alternative approach to supervision of student teachers in practicum was undertaken to ensure that the roles were more clearly defined.[11] The role of the program instructor was to facilitate the practicum process for the student, the sponsor educator and the university. Before the beginning of practicum, the instructor met with the sponsor educator. Throughout the practicum period, the instructor met with the cohort of students weekly and attended the school weekly for student observation and evaluation. The high level of involvement by the program instructor resulted in clear, well-communicated and mutually decided upon expectations among all participants. This approach led to a high level of success for the student in the practicum experience.

Contextual Model

Ralph, at the College of Education, University of Saskatchewan, presents a contextual model for supervision which "...emphasizes individuals' self-development and...follows an interactive process in determining the fit of development level with supervisory style."[12] The approach was founded on the principle that the teaching supervisor should match supervisory styles to the student's preferences, needs and styles. The model includes four levels of student development and four corresponding levels of supervisor style. The levels of student development are: D1, eager novice; D2, fearful neophyte; D3, reluctant contributor; D4, peak performer. Levels of supervisor style are: S1, directing, wherein the supervisor combines high-task and low-relationship behaviours to direct, tell, guide and control the student's progress; S2, coaching, in which the supervisor uses high-task and high-relationship actions, using more interpersonal interaction, sharing and careful explanation; S3, supporting, with the supervisor using a similar level of relationship behaviour as in coaching, but reducing the amount of directive behaviour; and S4, delegating, whereby the supervisor combines low-task and low-relationship activities to enable the student teacher intern to accept personal responsibility for performing the task in question.

The contextual model clearly articulates the roles and responsibilities of the student and sponsor educator, and allows for the adaptation of supervisory styles as students move through their practicum. For example, a student may begin practicum needing a directing supervisory approach. Through the progression of the practicum, students' needs may change

to a supporting style of supervision. Familiarity with the model for matching supervisor style with student readiness might assist supervisors in reframing their own misinterpretation of students' lack of skill or confidence as being resistance or stubbornness. Supervisors might then be enabled to determine and address legitimate problems to be resolved during the supervisory process.[13]

Collaborative Model

A collaborative model, involving four student teachers supervised by one college instructor, was developed by Caruso, Beck and Graham.[14] The instructor facilitated two pre-practicum group analysis sessions with students. The college instructor also performed formal observations of each student throughout the practicum. After two cycles of supervision, the student teachers carried out the cycle of supervision without the college instructor, with one student assuming the facilitator role in the group sessions. In this way, students were enabled to take charge of their own supervision.

Students reported that peer supervisors were nearly as helpful as their assigned college supervisor, and that group supervision sessions during practicum were valuable.

It is evident that the quality of supervision the student receives in practicum is a highly significant factor in determining the quality of the experience; thus, it is imperative that the working relationship between the student and the sponsor educator/supervisor be constructed to include components that contribute to successful learning experiences for the student.

Case Study of Students in ECE Practicum Following the Triadic Model of Supervision

A case study of two pairs of ECE students and sponsor educators was undertaken in 1996 to examine the elements within the student and sponsor educator relationship that led to success for the student and, further, to use the understanding for making improvements to benefit student learning.[15] The model for practicum supervision used was most similar to the "triadic model," with the college instructor, student and sponsor educator each having different roles. The case study focusses on student and sponsor educator. In each case, the student was involved in a concentrated practicum which occurred over a period of five to six weeks after the student had successfully completed course work in the ECE program. Each sponsor educator completed weekly assessments on the student's performance using a form provided by the college which listed the competencies required during the practicum. The sponsor educators discussed the assessment information with each student and the college instructor observed the student regularly, read the assessment information and provided feedback to the student (course expectations and assignments for the practicum were established by the ECE

program instructors and discussed thoroughly with students before the practicum began). Each student was responsible for building relationships with individual children, as well as planning and implementing a variety of small group activities with the children during the practicum period. Planning and consideration of the needs of individual children were done with the sponsor educator, with the instructor overseeing the format and content of plans and the student writing plan evaluations.

Participants in the Practicum Study

Case One participants were a sponsor educator (SE#1) who graduated from the ECE program at a community college in the B.C. interior eight years previously, and a mature student (SG#1). At the time of the study, SE#1 was owner/operator of a licensed nursery school program, and she employed a staff assistant. The practicum took place in the nursery school program serving children three and four years of age, with the usual group size being 10 children.

In Case Two, the student, SG#2, was placed with a sponsor educator (SE#2) who had graduated from the ECE program at a community college in the B.C. interior four years before. The practicum took place in an integrated group day care program with a total staff of five, which served children aged three through six years. Approximately 25 children were in the group each day.

Case One and Case Two had many similarities, each having its own working relationship. Case One seemed to have had a strong element of natural compatibility between the two; the Case Two relationship provided a situation for analysis for both individuals. Common themes emerged from the two cases:

- frequent communication
- open, clear, purposeful communication
- autonomy which leads to responsibility for self, self-reflection and taking initiative
- working together to support learning
- constructive criticism
- comfort and support
- respect and equality
- safe and non-threatening atmosphere

Analysis of the themes of the case study revealed a pattern of meta-themes of the working relationship present in the successful learning experiences for the students: being together and sharing experiences; talking together throughout the day; autonomy and sense of self; safe and non-threatening atmosphere; and making meaning of experiences.

Being Together and Sharing Experiences

The practicum involves a student working side by side with an experienced practitioner. Being together is the crux of the practical work, which makes it possible to cooperate, show a desire to learn, to purposefully watch to learn, and to model and demonstrate skills. Both people have opportunities to cooperate and be helpful to each other.

The student has numerous opportunities to purposefully watch the sponsor educator to learn skills and approaches to the many unique situations presented by individuals and combinations of young children. By observing multiple interactions between children and adults, the student has opportunities to gather ideas to enhance theoretical knowledge, and thus has information when assessing situations and deciding on a course of action.

Learning through modelling requires that the student have opportunities to observe and imitate skills. Improvements to the quality of practicum, such as that proposed by Smith,[16] which involve ongoing coaching and consistent modelling, have as a basic premise the assumption that the student and sponsor educator will be together. In this study, it was evident that modelling was important to both the student and the sponsor educator. An example of how SE#2 used skill modelling throughout the day to help the student learn is evident in the following excerpt:

INT: ***So you're pretty aware, like when you're reading a story, that you're modelling those skills around story presentation. So, after you do the modelling do you do anything with the student specifically to work on the student's understanding of the modelling?***

SE#2: ***One of SG#2's goals was to be more assertive with the kids and get attention, so I would make a goal for myself to be really clear with the kids and make sure I was getting it so that it was laid out properly for her. I wasn't being authoritarian and (was) finding ways to get that attention and to feed the kids interest.***

The sponsor educators' comments about recognizing their abilities and the students' expertise and receptiveness to their modelling skills illustrated how important it was to them to fulfil the students' need to learn from an experienced person.

SE#2: ***I think basically I'm on red alert when I have students because I want them to feel like they've got something out of it. It's great for the educators to sharpen their skills. Some pay attention a bit more, so that they're sharper, because they want to learn something. They consider if you've been in the field for a few years, there must be something there.***

INT: ***Can you imagine what it would be like trying to model for a student, especially the difficult things, and not talking about it?***

SE#1: ***No. Even a student who is very receptive and who picks up all the points needs to discuss things. If we were talking about another student who wasn't receptive, you could model all the time and get absolutely nowhere, not even with discussion.***

In this study, the students emphasized the importance of being with the sponsor educator and sharing experiences throughout the day. Opportunities for modelling and ongoing coaching are then continuous. For novice students, the duration and intensity of the modelling is important, as is the amount of talking together that is possible during the day.

Talking Together Throughout the Day

In ECE practice, the quality of human interaction depends on the communication between adults and children. Talking is important from the perspective of socializing a student to the ECE environment, and is also necessary for the student to develop understanding of the work. For study participants, it was essential to have talking times throughout the work day, use as many spontaneous moments to talk as possible, and also to have more formal meeting times. SG#1 commented on the frequency of talking throughout the day and importance to her of being able to talk often.

SG#1: ***First thing in the morning (we talked) when I got there ... and then we would discuss suggestions for the day and things to expect from the children. At the end of the day too, cleaning up, and after we would also have time to sit and talk and discuss these little things ... about what went on during the day. I got to discuss things right away with her rather than wait until a day later. The time that I did spend with her was very meaningful because we would discuss it right when it was going on, so I wouldn't forget about it, or we could deal with the issue right away. It was helpful because I could move on to something else.***

SE#2 commented about the extensiveness of the talking and showed how it was instrumental to building trust in the relationship—a trusting relationship being the foundation for supporting the student's learning.

SE#2: ***One on one I guess it would be on our breaks, otherwise it would be just catching moments away from the kids.... So it was more when we had times alone, say when the kids are napping. We would take the opportunity to go through things, maybe in the art room, everything that is going on, then we would review that, so we're constantly checking on each other about what was going on. She would tell me if it was really difficult for her and I would say the same if I had a really hard group or***

something wasn't going right. We would talk about what would make it better, what approach would work better. Sometimes, we had no idea, but we would just keep rolling out ideas all the time.

In discussing the development of trust between students and advisors, Daloz[17] emphasized the essential nature of the advisor listening carefully. It seems obvious that listening depends on talking and, for the student, many opportunities to talk with the sponsor educator hastens the process of engendering trust. Open conversation is the link that connects the people. The initial trust that the student has in the experienced practitioner is based on the authority of the role. However, after the sense of awe held by the student for the other begins to diminish, the trust needs nourishment through continued talking and increased sharing or mutuality.[18]

Autonomy and Sense of Self

In the ECE practicum, both the student and the sponsor educator require autonomy and a sense of self for the facilitation of change within the student. To develop skills in working with children, a person must practise the skills with children. A student needs the confidence and desire to practise, willingness to take initiative and try new things, and the ability to reflect on one's actions and take responsibility for self. Student–sponsor educator relationships that acted as a catalyst for change were those that allowed the individual independence and freedom to evolve through experiencing.

SG#1 explained the effect that a sense of autonomy had on her self-esteem and self-confidence.

SG#1: ***I think I brought the same person to every practicum but I don't think I came out the same person from every practicum.***

INT: ***Talk about that a little bit more, how is that different for you?***

SG#1: ***I came out of this practicum with a very positive image of myself because of the feedback I got from SE#1. I felt very confident about myself and I didn't have any doubts that I wasn't able to do something or tackle something. I didn't have any fears anymore of these eight children sitting in front of me in a circle because I knew I had the support of SE#1 all the time. That was a big thing for me to know that there was always somebody there that you could lean on. I knew that because of our relationship, the connection between the two of us, that I could always be me and that I wasn't expected to do something magical and be something I wasn't. So I had no fear to be with her and to be comfortable with her. In other practicums, I did have fears that this wouldn't work and I didn't feel supported the way that I did with SE#1.***

The student in Case Two also talked about her increasing acceptance of herself and her sense of personal responsibility as her confidence and autonomy grew:

SG#2: ***I realized it's part of my responsibility and those sort of things I should be able to do and to learn. It was more of an acceptance of, well it's a mistake, and it's okay and nobody is blaming me and nobody is angry at me. There is no need for me to be angry at anybody ... acceptance of having made a mistake and just not judging myself for it.***

Reflective practice, in which the student is actively involved in evaluating skills, knowledge and attitudes, is considered to be a way to improve the quality of the practicum experience.[19] Transformative experiences include self-reflection to the point of self-doubt, which leads to further self-analysis and to a shift in the way of viewing self. SG#2 talked about changes in her view of self through the opportunities she encountered during the year and how in this final practicum the positive experience was critical in confirming change within herself.

SG#2: ***It's really important to have good experiences like this because it reconciles you to this job. As an interim educator, it made me want to be one, because you know I had my doubts all the time, and I think a lot of people do and I had enough negative experiences during my year at school with all these practicums and observations. I had some difficult ones, ones that made me think "gee I don't think this is the right field for me, I'm going to change." My first observation, I almost wanted to quit everything. And then I went somewhere else and it got better ... and it got really good, and I can handle it, I like this, this is good work, I love doing this, this is the way I want it to be.***

In this study, students needed confidence and the independence to attempt change, as well as the assurance of freedom and opportunity from the sponsor educator. An individual is supported in the movement to orienting and committing self within a relativistic world by confirmation of worth, a sense of being valued and accepted.[20] Because the students were building the ability for self-reflection, they were better able to take responsibility for self within the relationship with the sponsor educator. They were able to view themselves from more than one perspective, orient themselves within the environment and thus meet challenges as they arose. The sense of equality and autonomy they both felt gave them freedom and encouragement to develop personal opinions and perspectives, and in turn to take initiative and risks.

Sponsor educators in this study expressed the importance to them of a practicum student quickly demonstrating confidence and beginning skills with children (i.e. understanding of how to build relationships with children). When the sponsor educators were able to observe these aspects very early in the practicum, they in turn were able to relate to the student with

more respect, equality and faith that the student had the potential to learn effectively in the setting.

Safe and Non-threatening Atmosphere

Healthy environments for children are those in which children are cared for and cared about. In the practicum, the student also needs to feel cared for and cared about in order to learn how to ensure healthy environments for children.

The descriptions of relationships in the study repeatedly included words such as comfort, support, respect, equality, and no threat, all descriptors of caring for and caring about. It is necessary for these elements to exist for a person to be able to take risks and open up to many learning opportunities. The two students involved in this study both talked about the lack of fear they felt in the working relationship, and that because they did not feel threatened by the sponsor educator, they could accept feedback and criticism in a non-defensive manner.

SG#1: ***She also would give me the opportunity to try it the next day. "Well, try that again, do you want to do this again and give it another shot?" She's very flexible and very understanding. I would ask her "can I try a song with the kids … that one didn't seem to work on Tuesday … what about doing it tomorrow." It was very comfortable that way. She gave me chances to re-learn or retry things.***

SG#2: ***(important characteristics of the relationship) The first thing is the respect for each other and the respect that I felt coming from SE#2 so that I was able to feel comfortable talking to her, comfortable to try things and to express my opinions. I learned a lot because of that comfort level, because she respected me and had confidence in me. She allowed me to do things and try things, not just watch her all the time.***

Support within the relationships reflected a strong sense of respect between the participants. Because both people felt respected by the other, they were able to take risks: the student took risks in trying things again and talking about her mistakes; the sponsor educator took risks in that she openly acknowledged her mistakes and that at times she did not know "right answers." The support and respect so essential to a learner, by providing a place for trust to grow, confirms in the learner a sense of worth and acceptance, and reinforces the learner's ability to change, grow and progress when she is ready.[21] Support and trust are intertwined, and are fed by the taking of risks by the participants in the relationship.

Supportive relationships are particularly important to women, as they tend to value nurturing, caring and comfort between people. Because of their concern for the well-being of people around them, the sense of comfort, support and respect are key elements in importance of the

relationship as a positive force for the woman.[22] In these cases, the students and sponsor educators—all women—viewed the supportiveness provided by the relationship to be a crucial factor in the success of the students' learning.

Making Meaning of Experiences

Practicum "as the final step in a formal training program … requires the synthesizing of all previous coursework, training, workshops, and background experience."[23] For synthesis to occur, an individual must actively engage in understanding experiences, in other words "meaning making." The meaning making in these cases was achieved through feedback, weaving together of theory and practice, problem solving, constructive criticism and absence of defensiveness. For the meaning making to occur, the other elements of being together, talking together, autonomy and safety must be in place. The following excerpt from an interview with SG#2 illustrated how the weaving together of feedback, application of theory to practice, problem solving and constructive criticism resulted in meaning making for her:

INT: ***Can you give an example of how SE#2 helped you to analyse the situation, some kind of learning situation?***

SG#2: ***The first thing that comes to my mind is that I was setting up an activity. We had quite a few children and SE#2 was standing there with me watching everything and I was encouraging the children to crawl in the worm cave and see what it felt like. Then the children started to get really hyper around it and as we were doing the activity, SE#2 and I were discussing what was going on at the same time because … I could withdraw and watch. She was pointing out things that the children were doing. For example, one of the children decided to feed the worms and he started bringing over pretend food to feed the worms, and how that was an incredible opportunity to talk about what worms eat and what they do when they eat. And so she pointed that out to me … as the activity was happening she was pointing things out and linking it to theory as it was going on, and light bulbs were going off for me. Later on the activity got too much, they got too hyper. That's when SE#2 started pointing out that this is when it needs to be stopped or changed. So her watching and pointing things out and showing things were really helpful, because had I been alone I think I would have missed out on some of those things. I would have been too involved in controlling and trying to make them do things whereas she helped by talking to me.***

In a sense, this sponsor educator was challenging the student to observe and analyse what the children were doing in the play. The understanding of how to extend the play of the children in itself extends the learning of the student. Therefore, the sponsor educator's questions stimulate thinking and analysis in the student. The blend of support and challenge[24] enhances

the interchange between the two. In this circumstance, the student talked about how the sponsor educator asked her to think about ways to deal with the situation, then supported her in following through with the decision. This example illustrates a student's need to have positive expectations from the sponsor educator[25] and to believe in her capabilities and judgements.

The students needed constructive criticism to provide assurance about themselves and their work, as well as specific information about how to do the work and improve their skills. The students in this study commented on the lack of constructive criticism from other sponsor educators during their practica, and on their perception of much less valuable learning in these situations.

The students' learning was facilitated by a working relationship in which they were supported in constructing their own understanding, and in which positive expectations of them led to self-confidence and further risk taking. The provision of a vision of what the student was capable of becoming was a powerful force in their evolving sense of vision for themselves.

Issues and Conditions Related to Student Success in the Practicum Experience

The participants of the case study[26] described in detail the side-by-side working of the ECE student and the sponsor educator throughout each day and the opportunities provided for cooperation, helpfulness, showing a desire to learn, purposefully watching to learn, and modelling. The continuous nature of the work led to a wide variety and number of learning opportunities, particularly important when working with children because of the spontaneous and complex aspects of the work. Both of these sponsor educators took their role seriously and made their commitment to the role clear to the student. Each of the students stated that she appreciated the attitude of the sponsor educator toward the role.

The study suggests that for practica to be effective learning situations, the early childhood educators must be serious about the importance of their role as sponsor educators, must be truly available to the students, and find a variety of ways to communicate effectively with the student. They must be comfortable with being a model for students and with providing feedback and constructive criticism. They must themselves be autonomous and facilitate autonomy in the student. They must be capable of providing support, challenge and vision to the student. As well, the serious and important role of the sponsor educator needs to be acknowledged by ensuring that there is work time available to do the work required.

Students, on the other hand, must be serious about maximizing their learning in the practicum setting. They require autonomy and a sense of self and the ability for self-reflection before

they enter the practicum, as well as beginning skills with children and confidence that they have some skills. The students need a strong grasp of theory to be able to successfully integrate with practice, the primary goal of the practicum.

Instructors need to take initiative in bridging the gap between the theoretical perspective of the training program and the practical perspective of the agencies where the practicum occurs. Students must be prepared before they begin the practicum and instructors need to assess the readiness of the student for the practicum experience. Instructors must also take responsibility for preparing sponsor educators for the role they will be undertaking with students, and helping them understand how to facilitate the students' learning.

To provide suitable practicum placements for students, instructors need to have a thorough understanding and familiarity with the agencies and staff, develop a peer-like working relationship with staff, and clarify the role and responsibilities of the sponsor educator and the instructor in relation to students. They must consider the suitability of the student's style to the supervision style of the sponsor educator. The instructor should take a large part in arranging the practicum, and then clearly take responsibility for formal evaluation during the practicum.

Implications of the Case Study for Supporting Student Success in Practicum

1. **ECCE students in practicum benefit from the sponsor educator role providing support, challenge and vision for the student.**

ECCE students in the study benefited from constructive criticism which was frequent, positively presented, and given most often in verbal form and sometimes written form. Sponsor educators are trained and skilful in working with young children; however, they seldom have specific training in instructing adults. If the sponsor educators were given skill training in providing specific feedback and constructive criticism, they would be better prepared to use the skills in working with students and more likely to feel comfortable in saying things that might be construed as being critical.

Specific conclusions:

- The responsibilities of the sponsor educator should be recognized in the job description of the early childhood educator and this person should have work time and/or release from other responsibilities to do the work required.
- Sponsor educators should be chosen based on their desire and commitment for the role.

- Sponsor educators should be provided with training that develops skill in modelling, explanation of practice within a theoretical context and giving specific feedback and constructive criticism.

2. The quality of the practicum experience for ECCE students could be enhanced by building students' ability for critical self-reflection.

Strategies for improving the practicum experience for the student include the active involvement of students in reflective practice through evaluating skills, knowledge and attitudes.[27] Prior to practicum, the ability to engage in critical self-reflection could be developed in students through coursework designed for that purpose.

Specific conclusions:

- Consideration of the readiness of students for practicum should include demonstration of a beginning ability to be self-aware and to self-reflect; positive working relationships; a high level of personal involvement in work and an internal locus of control; and the ability to accept feedback. ECCE coursework should be designed to enhance critical thinking and the ability for critical self-reflection.

3. ECCE students would benefit by specific skill development before practicum so they enter practicum with competence and self-confidence.

It is important that students have numerous opportunities within classroom experience and simulated lab situations to practise skills and begin to develop confidence in themselves before the initiation of block practicum in field settings. Previous studies have suggested that practica be improved by focussing on the goal of the student mastering effective teaching behaviours.[28] If the student had specific skills before the practicum, the mastery of effective teaching behaviours during practicum would be enhanced. Training programs in which students work closely with college instructors in facilitating a children's program hold possibilities for developing confidence and competence in students.

Specific conclusions:

- Readiness of students for practicum should be improved by strengthening the understanding of applying relevant theory to the practice of working with children.
- In-class learning activities in the ECCE program should be designed with a focus on the student demonstrating beginning skills before the practicum.

4. Students would benefit if instructors arranged practicum placements considering a match between the student and sponsor educator that fit the student's confidence and skill level, as well as the need for intellectual challenge.

Ralph[29] described a model of contextual supervision which provides a means to fit supervisory style with student development. Application of the four levels of the model may assist instructors in determining appropriate matches between students and sponsor educators. The match of the two is of great importance. However, it is often based on a vague sense by the instructor about which individuals might work well together, location of residence and settings, or numbers of students and placements, rather than a careful analysis of the factors defined in the model.

Specific conclusions:

- Instructors should develop a thorough understanding and familiarity with early childhood agencies and staff so they can select and prepare the sponsor educator for working with the student.
- Instructors should access and use methods of building appropriate matches between student and sponsor educator such as the one described by Ralph.[30]

Issues Inherent in the ECCE Practicum

A study done in 1997 by the Early Childhood Educators of British Columbia[31] began examining the issues related to the ECCE practicum. The project followed a process of community consultation with seven regional focus groups consisting of students, sponsor educators, employers, program instructors and other members of the early childhood education community.

Analysis of the information gathered from the focus groups revealed many shared issues and concerns. The common themes found can be categorized into student issues, employer issues, centre issues (sponsor educators/sites), ECE training institution issues and distance education issues.[32]

Student Issues

Financial issues were significant for students, especially those who must take time away from jobs to complete post-basic requirements. Part-time students do not qualify for student financial aid and Employment Insurance will not pay students while they are completing practicum. Other issues included heavy workloads, stress and inflexible timelines for completing practicum, qualifications of sponsor educators to supervise and evaluate students, the need for quality settings, and the need to assess student readiness before undertaking practicum.

Employer Issues

When centre staff leave to complete practicum requirements, there is often a negative effect on staff morale and on the quality and consistency of the program. There may also be financial

strain caused by providing paid leave for staff during their practicum and paying substitutes. There is often a shortage of qualified substitutes to replace staff. Having students fulfil practicum requirements in their own work setting may be problematic.

Centre Issues (Sponsor Educators/Sites)

Problems regarding inconsistent student evaluation criteria and unclear expectations for sponsor educators' qualifications were identified. Concern was raised regarding demands on sponsor educator's time which resulted in the use of administrative time, breaks, time away from children or the sponsor educator's own time. The additional demands have cost implications for programs, such as burdening sponsor educators and other staff, reducing the quality of the program which affects the children, and adding direct financial costs for staff release time to supervise practicum students. Too many practicum students can result in a ratio of adults to children that is disruptive, and staff and student relationships can be disrupted when supervisory roles are adopted. The need for more quality child care centres available for practicum students was also noted.

ECCE Training Institution Issues

As in centre issues, inconsistencies related to practicum in both expectations and evaluation criteria for students were also a common concern. There appeared to be little consistent selection criteria for practicum sites, and the number of hours of practicum varied from one institution to another. Difficulty in locating appropriate practicum sites was a common issue, with qualifications of sponsor educators being a specific concern.

Distance Education Issues

Issues raised included the difficulty of instructors in assessing the suitability of practicum sites for students, and the lack of face-to-face dialogue between sponsor educators and program instructors. A lack of supervision for students and opportunity for sponsor educators to provide input into student evaluations, need for standardized evaluation criteria for assessing students, and investigating the expectations of students in distance education programs were also identified.

Strategies and Solutions That Might Address Issues Inherent in Practicum

The focus groups involved in the B.C. study identified four categories of strategies and solutions to address issues and improve practica:

- flexibility regarding training institution policies, instructor availability, practicum site alternatives and arrangements to meet the individual needs of students (e.g. summer practica);
- standardization and coordination of training programs (in British Columbia) regarding objectives, evaluation criteria, practicum expectations, practicum materials and selection of quality practicum sites (an accreditation model was suggested to support site standardization);
- professional development for sponsor educators to undertake and maintain the role, support their currency in the field and improve their ability to work with adult students; and
- funding sources which could be accessed in order to support practicum sites for their participation in the training of early childhood educators.

It is recognized that a complex array of situations exists. The study suggests that an organizational framework is needed for the coordination of activities to ensure that practicum issues will be resolved at the local, regional and provincial levels. A follow-up project has been designed to gather feedback on a proposed set of strategies from stakeholders around the province, and to then develop provincial practicum guidelines and regional implementation strategies. This work will offer valuable information to the early childhood care and education field and for the important work of preparing students through the practicum experience.

Endnotes

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23. Machado & Botnarescue, 1993, p. 2.
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PART 6

An Internship Model for Early Childhood Care and Education

by JoAnne Hurst

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Abstract

Internship is a period of intense practice following a program of study. This section presents an overview of internship programs of the Dieticians of Canada and the Child Life Council. Dietician students must apply for internship, have a 70 percent average, one year of previous related work experience and provide references. The Child Life Council is an international organization of professionals who promote well-being of children and their families by assisting them to cope with stress of health care experiences. The Council has a 14-week internship program.

Based on these two models, Hurst proposes an ECCE internship model, including an overview of interests, qualifications, application process and an outline of ECCE admission requirements. She also outlines some next steps but admits the process is difficult with no national ECCE organization.

Introduction

Internship typically refers to a session of intense practice usually following a program of theory, or toward the end or completion of a program of study. The internship is usually specialized for development of specific skills in an area of further interest to the student or intern. There is an instruction or theory component related to the specialty area occurring regularly throughout the internship. The internship is supervised, monitored and evaluated by a coordinator. The intern develops learning objectives specific to the chosen internship area and the experiences span a variety of roles and responsibilities in the internship setting. Human relations and communication skills are also an integral part of the total experience.

In Canada, ECCE programs are postsecondary and are one, two, three or four years in duration. All provincially recognized ECCE programs contain a theory and practical component. Quality of the programs for children and families in early childhood care and education is directly related to the specialized training received by practitioners. This specialized training and knowledge allows them to appropriately meet the needs of the young child and the family and provide a quality environment. There are three aspects of practitioner preparation: supervised work experience, level of education, and amount and type of specialized training and practice in early childhood care and education.[1]

Most ECCE programs focus on the reflective practice model, gradually allowing students to build on experiences related to theory and to develop skills in a variety of practice situations. Students are involved at different levels in the practice and regularly encouraged to reflect, reassess, understand what they are doing, why they are doing it, and then question their actions and decisions. This process allows development as a professional. Students generally have a variety of options of practice in settings such as infant, toddler, preschool and school-age care. Skill and competency levels are integrated into each level and year of the program and success at each level through continuous supervision and evaluation is required.

The internship definition described in the introduction, used in familiar disciplines such as medicine and nursing, provides an opportunity for practice during or after study. As discussed, this practice is already an integral part of the early childhood care and education profession. However, internship opportunity in the profession could be developed to provide for further specialized or specific post-graduate training and experience.

An overview will be presented of two existing internship programs from different professional organizations, the Dietitians of Canada and the Child Life Council. These two programs were chosen as examples to show the criteria and scope of the opportunities and programs. The Dietitians of Canada is a national professional organization and only an overview of the internship and criteria for application have been outlined. The Child Life Council is an international professional organization and has been described in more detail to provide information about the requirements and scope of the internship experience.

Dietitians of Canada

Dietetics integrates and applies the principles of food, nutrition and health to promote the nutritional well-being of the public. Professional dietitians are qualified by the Dietitians of Canada, a professional organization following a four-year accredited baccalaureate degree program, plus either a one-year dietetic internship in an accredited institution, an accredited Integrated Internship Program dietetic internship or a recognized master's degree. Any institution offering an internship program must meet the accreditation guidelines of the

Dietitians of Canada. There are currently four options in a dietetic program to prepare students for specific work settings: General Dietetics for careers in hospitals or long-term care facilities; Clinical Dietetics for working in specialized nutritional care settings; Community Dietetics for careers in home care, fitness centres and workplace wellness programs; and Food Service Systems for working as managers of food service operations in health care, schools or business.

Students apply for graduate dietetic internship in the final year of study or for the Integrated Education Program dietetic internship during their third year. Formal application is required by students wishing admission into dietetic internship programs. Students must have at least a 70 percent average and previous related work experience before applying. External references are required and students must show evidence of above average written and spoken communication skills, problem-solving and human relations skills. The current national acceptance average for all students applying across Canada for dietetic internship is approximately 50 percent. The one-year internship is supervised by a licensed dietitian and each competency must be completed and signed off at completion.

Child Life Council

The Child Life Council is an international organization that monitors and sets standards of clinical practice for all Child Life programs and also certifies Child Life specialists and Child Life workers. Child Life's mission is to promote the well-being of children and their families by assisting them to cope with the stress of health care experiences. The internship program is offered in some pediatric hospital settings under the supervision of a certified Child Life specialist. The sponsoring institution is required to support the goals and purposes of the Child Life Council, supply adequate personnel and sufficient facilities. Qualifications of faculty and staff must indicate backgrounds of study and professional experience directly related to the experience each oversees. The internship program is based on a series of Child Life specialist competencies.

The Child Life internship typically offers a 14-week block program for individuals who usually have an undergraduate degree in Child Life, Child and Youth Study, Child Development or who have completed the third year of the Child Life degree program. Prospective interns are required to have related experience working with children and families in a health care setting and academic course work meeting Child Life Council certification standards. All candidates must demonstrate a high level of academic achievement and personal qualities appropriate for interrelationships with children, families, peers, supervisors and health professionals.

The application process requires academic and work-related references, with college or university transcripts and course outlines. An interview process assesses the interpersonal,

verbal and written skills of the candidate as well as the knowledge of child life and child development. A fee is charged for the internship program and study.

Child Life interns are individually supervised and learning experiences are tailored to meet personal learning goals established on acceptance. Learning opportunities are provided through orientation, daily clinical work with patients, daily seminars relating directly to Child Life work, and weekly individual supervisory sessions using the evaluation tool based on Child Life Council competencies. Under the guidance of the certified Child Life specialist, the Child Life intern is responsible for the planning, coordination, delivery and evaluation of programs in an assigned area of the hospital. The Child Life intern functions as a member of the Child Life team and the interdisciplinary team within the health care setting.

Child Life interns begin by formulating individual goals and objectives by consulting with academic faculty and clinical personnel. These are developed to create opportunities to interrelate theory and practice. The clinical supervisor holds weekly evaluative conferences with the intern to provide prompt feedback. Guided practice, corrective instruction and development of strategies are integral aspects of the supervision process throughout an internship.

Each student's total internship experiences, whether at one site or in several, includes the following:

- play interactions (assessments, planning, implementation) with children representing the range of developmental levels in pediatric care;
- development of long-range goals and their pursuit with selected patients over time;
- group play and management;
- individual, therapeutically oriented interactions, including preparation and development of associated coping process;
- stress reduction techniques regarding choices in behaviours that help tolerate procedures;
- supportive interactions, including child development consultation with families;
- consideration of sibling issues;
- consideration of cross-cultural and socio-economic issues;
- interaction and coordination with nurses, physicians and members of other hospital disciplines and participation in at least one team meeting to observe how a team formally interacts;
- charting;
- familiarization with infection control, safety issues and other relevant hospital policies;
- materials management; and
- coordination with volunteers.

An intern is expected to be enthusiastic and demonstrate initiative in programming and interactions with children. An intern is expected to participate in all phases of the program which may include working evenings, weekends and holidays.

Early Childhood Care and Education Internship Model

An internship program does not currently exist in any form within the early childhood care and education profession in Canada. In reviewing these two internship programs or models, particularly the detailed Child Life model, and reflecting on what possibilities might exist for internship opportunity for the early childhood care and education profession, the task is not easy. One obvious missing component is a national professional organization with standards and practice for the early childhood care and education profession. However, the following elements could present opportunity for beginning discussion and later possible development of an ECCE internship.

Existing ECCE training programs provide students with theory and the opportunity for practice. These programs usually take place in a variety of settings and provide opportunities for skill development for working with children of different ages. However, rarely does a student have the opportunity for concentrated practice, theory and skill development in one particular area. The model structure presented below is general, but it could provide postgraduate students with internship specialization in areas such as special needs, infant care, early intervention, school-age care and programming, administration, resource and family programs, or family home care.

An ECCE internship model would include:
- overview of internship
- qualifications
- application process
- outline of an ECCE administration internship

Overview of Internship

An internship in ECCE would be on a non-credit basis for those who have already graduated from a two-, three- or four-year ECCE training program. The internship learning experiences would be tailored to meet the specific roles and responsibilities of the intern's chosen area of specialization. The internship would be for a six-month block placement. Interns would be individually supervised and learning experiences tailored to meet the intern's personal learning goals and objectives.

Learning opportunities would include a thorough orientation at the beginning of the internship; involvement on a daily basis with the job requirements; and learning the roles and responsibilities of the chosen program. Bi-weekly scheduled seminar sessions directly related to the work would be held by placement supervisors. Weekly individual supervisory sessions would involve the use of an evaluation tool based on competencies developed for each specialized skill area.

The organization of each internship program would span the six-month period. Initially, there would be an orientation period for the intern to become familiar with all components of the program, including procedures, policies, programming, organizational structure and community involvement. The intern would then participate in extensive work experience in all aspects of the program. A research and theory component would be an integral part of the internship. The intern would complete readings relating to the specialized area and provide feedback, reflective discussion and reaction papers. The intern would make presentations and complete projects related directly to the specialist area. Opportunities for visits and exposure to other similar programs would extend and expand all experiences.

Qualifications

Prospective interns would present a developed career plan which would demonstrate a solid knowledge of the early childhood care and education profession and detailed learning objectives of pursuing a career in the chosen area of specialization. Applicants should demonstrate appropriate interpersonal skills. Prospective interns should have good verbal communication and possess the ability to build rapport and trusting professional relationships with both children and adults. A minimal entry qualification would be graduation from a two-year Early Childhood Training program. Completed curriculum should reflect an understanding of child growth and development, family issues, cultural diversity and basic developmentally appropriate programming skills. Grades should be above average at 75 percent. Previous work and volunteer experience should be documented with academic, work, volunteer and practica-related references.

Application Process

Prospective interns would apply to accredited postsecondary training institutions offering an ECCE internship program. The application process would require submission of a completed application form, official transcript from college or university attended, a current résumé and reference letters. A personal interview would then be scheduled.

Upon acceptance, the intern would secure a faculty supervisor from the training institution who would coordinate the entire internship program. The next step would be securing the cooperation of a centre or program for the internship and a supervisor from the centre or program. In consultation with the faculty and program supervisor, the intern would establish

the time frame and schedule of the internship and begin to develop personal learning goals and learning experience. The intern would follow the competencies established for the specialization by the professional organization. A fee would be charged to cover administration costs.

Early Childhood Care and Education Administration Internship Model

Careful planning and administration are essential to the success of ECCE programs. As programs for children and families are continually expanding and diversifying, the responsibilities and position of a program administrator become even more important to providing quality care. The more an administrator knows and understands the factors influencing quality, the better equipped she or he will be to plan and administer programs. The responsibility falls to the administrator to select and organize the program, including philosophy, goals, policies, procedures, curriculum development, equipment, staffing and personnel issues, finances and evaluation. The role of parents and staff, and the partnerships and connections to the community are critical elements.

An ECCE administration internship could be developed under the following framework considering these key elements of the administrative process:

Month one

- Role of government (federal, provincial, municipal)
- Legislation and regulations
- Philosophy statement of centre/program
- History of centre
- Administration (structure and organization)
- Governance structure

Month two

- Program (philosophy, curriculum, evaluation)
- Planning (schedule)
- Grouping of children
- Indoor space design
- Outdoor space design
- Nutrition, health and safety
- Assessment, recording, reporting

Month three

- Budget
- Income
- Parent payment system
- Payroll
- Subsidy
- Fund raising

Month four

- Policies (characteristics, categories)
- Procedures (record keeping, inventory)
- Child information
- Parent information
- Staff information

Month five

- Staffing (staff information)
- Role/responsibilities of staff
- Qualifications of staff
- Recruitment and hiring policies
- Job descriptions
- Evaluation of staff (performance appraisals)
- Professionalism

Month six

- Parent involvement (orientation, education)
- Centre (community relationships, interaction)
- Parent resource information
- Communications (strategies)
- Volunteers
- Student involvement/placement

The evaluation of the intern in an ECCE internship would be an ongoing process over the six months and an integral part of the internship. An important component of the evaluation process throughout the internship would be recognizing and incorporating the previous practice and experience within the profession that the intern brings to the administrative position. Reflective practice would be a key element. As reflective practitioners, interns would be required to look at what they are doing, why they are doing it, and make

adjustments based on their understanding of their responsibility as an administrator for children, families, staff and community. The evaluation would involve the intern through self-evaluation, the supervising administrator and the faculty liaison supervisor.

Some of the areas to be covered in the evaluation process of any specialized internship would include the following categories and elements:

Interpersonal qualities and attitudes

- Initiative
- Dependability
- Flexibility
- Self-confidence
- Sensitivity

Professional attitude and behaviour

- Consideration of others
- Appreciation of ethical concerns
- Time management
- Ability to self-evaluate
- Ability to manage feedback and supervision
- Integration of supervision for learning and development
- Overall level of professionalism

Communication skills

- Ability to communicate effectively with adults
- Ability to communicate effectively with children
- Quality of overall spoken communication
- Quality of overall written communication
- Communicates own ideas, plans
- Prepares adequately
- Seeks out needed information and assistance

Evaluation criteria that could be considered in an administration internship

- Understands overall administrative structure of program
- Understands role and responsibilities of those involved with program
- Demonstrates positive and productive organizational skills
- Completes assigned projects efficiently
- Demonstrates ability to prepare appropriate materials and communications professionally

- Exercises good judgement in decision making and communications
- Practises effective and professional contact with relevant individuals

Conferences and written evaluations would be held monthly during the internship. The intern would be responsible for completing self-evaluations monthly which would be reviewed with the program supervisor and faculty supervisor. The program supervisor would also evaluate monthly and provide detailed feedback during conference meetings, reviewing and revising goals and objectives outlined at the beginning of the internship.

The early childhood care and education profession is at a crossroads in Canada. Some efforts have resulted in development of an understanding of minimal standards for practice and some consensus of what contributes to and is valued in developmentally appropriate practice in programs. However, there still exists a need for some rethinking or extending opportunities for further professional development for early childhood teachers and educators. Early childhood educators who have had the opportunity for extended employment in the profession are aware of issues such as the high staff turnover and low pay. They have worked with untrained caregivers who lack an understanding of child development. As needs of children and families expand and diversify, program administrators shoulder the burden for providing quality care. They are accountable for program quality. Coordinators and program directors are overwhelmed with responsibilities and time constraints. In addition, they lack specialized training to manage the complex issues relating to the children, staff and families in their care on a daily basis. The need for extended opportunities for specific professional development and specialization is evident.

Internship opportunities for specialized, extended training in particular areas of early childhood care and education will strengthen the profession. Interns would bring their own experience and learning style to each opportunity. Their previous knowledge and practice would provide a new level of learning that would benefit all stakeholders—children, parents, educators and community. The internship would foster further reflection, critical thinking and responsive approaches that would extend throughout the profession. Each internship opportunity in a specialized area would need to be developed separately.

In reviewing the concept of internship and the opportunity for further professional development and specialization through an ECCE internship, one could examine the four developmental stages of preschool teachers defined by Lillian Katz in 1972.[2]

Stage I – Survival

This is the stage of a beginning teacher (approximately the first year and a half) attempting to manage the many responsibilities attached to care and supervision of young children. On-site technical assistance with encouragement and supervision are important at this level.

Stage II – Consolidation

At this stage, a teacher has developed some self-confidence and begins to focus on specific tasks and skills, as well as plan for children on an individual basis considering the specific developmental level of the child. The teacher has gained the experience and confidence to deal with challenging situations, and is developing resources as well as a support network of specialists, colleagues and advisors within the profession.

Stage III – Renewal

Following several years of teaching, the teacher begins to look for new challenges and opportunities for further professional development. He or she is familiar with program and related curriculum and looking for advancement in the profession, resulting in interest in extensive opportunities for further training opportunities.

Stage IV – Maturity

At this stage, teachers have developed professionally to a level where they continuously seek and exchange information with others in the profession and have become involved at a community level in organizations relating to early child and family care.

An ECCE internship could be a very natural link to the Stage III level of professional development for teachers. As a profession, it is important to recognize that these levels of teacher development do exist. It is also crucial to provide opportunities for professional and personal development for teachers—this could be provided through an internship.

First Steps/Next Steps

An internship model for early childhood care and education does not currently exist in Canada. In reviewing the internship model from Dietitions of Canada and the Child Life Council, some missing steps can be identified. In both internship programs, the national organizations set the standards and qualifies/certifies the intern when the program has been completed. These organizations are also responsible for accreditation of the institutions and programs offering or supervising the internships. The management of both the above and most other internship programs (e.g. medicine, engineering) is the complete responsibility of the professional organization. An obvious gap for the early childhood care and education profession is a national organization.

Therefore, the first step would be identification and establishment of a national group or organization to assume some of the current and developing responsibilities for issues relating to the profession and professionalization. Identification of the professional organization or group would lead to the next step—identifying or accrediting training institutions to provide, as requested, internship opportunities. The professional organization must accredit the

supervising institution. The actual management of the internship would rest with the training institution. For training institutions, particularly two-year programs, this opportunity to provide the internship program could fill the need for professional development specialist opportunities.

Recent years have shown an increased effort to improve program planning, implementation and evaluation of ECCE programs as more people are concerned about the care and education of young children and their families. Caregiver training is an important element in providing quality care, and research has shown that specialized training should include development of skills for working with parents, children with special needs, and the social and economic stresses that affect families today.

Perhaps some issues, new solutions or future directions could arise from the Partners in Quality project of the Canadian Child Care Federation. This project is researching many issues around quality and professionalism, and elements of the supportive infrastructure around standards of practice, code of ethics training and education. An ECCE internship model such as presented could be an exciting and innovative project. There are many early childhood care and education professionals who would appreciate the opportunity for extended practice, theory and skill development in a specialized area.

Endnotes

1. Phillips & Howes, 1987; Whitebook et al., 1989
2. Katz, 1972

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PART 7

Professional Development

by Karen Chandler

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Abstract

This section discusses professionalism and how it relates to early childhood care and education. The goals of professional development are outlined. Chandler has compiled a number of principles for a successful professional development environment by reviewing several documents on ECCE training. She also outlines various formats for professional development, including orientating, on-the-job training and career development.

Five Canadian professional development programs are highlighted. Three of the programs focus on child care practitioners or administrators. A model professional development is described. Based on the review of these programs, Chandler concludes by reviewing the keys to a successful professional development program and some of the issues to be addressed.

Early Childhood Care and Education as a Profession

Many believe that a child care environment is only as good as the practitioners working in it.[1] That is, the quality of early childhood care and education that children receive depends upon the attitudes, knowledge and skills of the people who care for and educate them—in centres, family child care homes and other early childhood settings. Good programs for young children rely on competent practitioners, and central to the development of competent caregivers are quality preparation programs, continual growth and acquisition of knowledge and skills.

It is accepted that the quality of early childhood care and education environments is influenced by the level of professionalism in the field. Professionalism refers to a combination of competence in a particular field of knowledge (i.e. working with children, families, other professionals) and identification/collaboration with colleagues who can

collectively define and support quality practices. To demonstrate professionalism requires an individual to demonstrate an ability to act knowledgeably and competently in ways that make a positive and sustained difference; to be able to assess and analyse situations; to select the most appropriate approaches; to be able to use them skilfully; and to articulate why they were selected.

There is a diversity of routes taken to become a caregiver of young children. In Canada, qualifications are determined by provincial/territorial regulations. Most provinces and territories require minimal, if any, preparation for centre- and home-based caregivers. Approximately 80 percent of practitioners work in the unlicensed sector which has no standards. A typical home provider has a high school diploma and little or no formal training in early childhood education. In addition, most providers are unlicensed and out of contact with typical sources of training.[2] Further complicating matters is high job turnover among providers. Some view their mothering experiences as adequate preparation for caring for other people's children. Because in family day care settings the caregiver is usually the sole adult in charge, her influence is even more pervasive than that of staff in centre-based settings who invariably have colleagues who also work with the children. *Caring for a Living*[3] found 68 percent of those surveyed had a postsecondary credential. A preservice education enables future educators to learn the knowledge base and techniques necessary for informed and effective performance before they begin work. Thus, the qualifications that caregivers bring to their work are important considerations. Training, preservice and inservice need to be at the heart of discussions about quality child care.

Additional challenges in upgrading the workforce include the emergence of greatly diversified settings serving infants as well as children over 10 years of age, more children from diverse ethnic groups and more children with special needs. These all require ECCE practitioners to have specific knowledge and skills. To meet the diverse professional development needs of individuals working in such a variety of roles and settings with a range of professional responsibilities, a variety of ongoing development opportunities need to be available.

Most occupational groups recommend or require ongoing professional development activities for members engaged in professional practice. The purpose of such development is to move the person to the next stage of professional competence, facilitate continuing competence and to ensure that he or she is made aware of relevant new knowledge. Professional development and inservice training serve to keep practitioners up to date with current research and pedagogical developments through activities such as attendance at workshops and conferences, membership in professional organizations and participation in inservice education programs. Early childhood care and education is no exception, with numerous child care organizations providing various forms of continuing education.

A definition of professional development includes any opportunity for an individual to learn new skills, enhance existing ones or to learn new information that builds self-confidence, personal empowerment and a network of support. It is an ongoing process of development and lifelong learning. This definition is contrasted with training. Training programs are usually short-lived, skill-oriented and typically address only one aspect of teaching or caring for children.

Part of a professional certification process is the requirement for ongoing professional development to assure current relevancy to respond to changes in theory and practice. Although research has established a strong link between formal education in child development and early childhood education and effective performance with young children, the field lacks a collective mechanism to upgrade systematically the knowledge and skills of caregivers. In most professions, a person must fulfil a specified number of professional development hours annually to maintain registration in the professional body. For example, a certified social worker is required to fulfil 75 hours of professional development over a five-year period. Prince Edward Island is the only province to require staff working in centre-based settings to participate in professional development while working in the field.

The field needs a unifying definition of professionals, independent of job setting or role, and a model that would focus on categories as determined by a combination of professional preparation, ongoing development and experience. This approach would allow those in the field—from front-line practitioners to government licensors—to be embraced by the professional categorization system, as long as they meet the necessary requirements. The advantages of such a system would be numerous. There would be a larger and more powerful constituent group. The structure would facilitate more career mobility. Practitioners would not be limited to a specific setting or age group. Consequently, more people could view the field as a profession with a career path and could contribute toward its advancement. Such a conceptual model is not fully developed in Canada, although aspects are being addressed by several provincial organizations.

Practitioners need recognition of their professional roles and responsibilities. Increased recognition of educational qualifications, improved compensation and working conditions usually accompany professional status. These crucial conditions ensure that the profession attracts and keeps good and experienced practitioners.

This section focusses on goals and principles of effective professional development programs; training formats; a description of five model programs; and a description of both barriers to and conditions required for successful implementation. Although the section primarily addresses the issues of front-line practitioners, there is some mention of individuals in other roles such as administrators or ECCE faculty.

Goals of Professional Development

The concept of professional development is a growth-oriented one. It is based on the assumption that all individuals benefit from opportunities for renewal and that the quality of care cannot only be maintained but improved through a well-planned and continuing program of experiences. Bloom, Sheerer and Britz[4] summarized the reasons for professional development activities. They:

- provide basic skills and an orientation to the profession for those who are untrained;
- extend a practitioner's expertise and skills in specific areas;
- provide opportunities to learn about new developments in a rapidly changing field;
- remind individuals about expectations;
- identify resources (people and materials) that can be pursued independently;
- reduce professional isolation;
- broaden one's perspective of early childhood care and education;
- promote the establishment of informal support networks;
- empower individuals to take a more active role in their own work, education and professional development;
- increase enjoyment of work; and
- boost morale and self-respect.

Growth-oriented individual development can take place through planned, ongoing, face-to-face supervision as well as through small- and large-group and other enriching experiences that take place on a regular basis. Programs that focus on the specific needs of individuals at different phases of their professional development should challenge them without being overwhelming. A good professional development program is balanced with experiences that bring all practitioners together, build relationships with and among individuals, increase communication, work on common problems and issues, and maintain high spirit and morale.

Principles of Effective Professional Development

The following principles identify common themes related to ensuring an effective process of professional development, regardless of level, role or setting. These principles are based on a compilation of the following documents: *National Family Day Care Training Project: Synthesis Report*,[5] "What Is Best Practice in ECCE Training?"[6] and the *NAEYC Position Statement: A Conceptual Framework for Early Childhood Professional Development*.[7]

1. **Professional development is an ongoing process.**

All early childhood practitioners—no matter how qualified—need to continue to incorporate into their professional repertoire new knowledge and skills that strengthen how they relate to young children and their families. A professional development program depends upon the composition of people involved in it. Just as the adult individualizes approaches to children, the trainer, often the supervisor, must recognize the developmental level of each individual and accommodate accordingly. The content must be adjusted to the experiential level and career stage as well as specific concerns, capabilities and perspectives of each person, and should focus on the long-term growth and change of the individual.

2. **Professional development experiences are most effective when grounded in a sound theoretical and philosophical base and structured as a coherent and systematic program**.

Professional development opportunities should be accessible in terms of costs, location and time. Currently, many early childhood practitioners, particularly those who have not completed formal preparation programs, gain training through a scatter-shot approach that often reflects child care licensing requirements or the availability of training opportunities at a given time. This approach makes it difficult to integrate and apply new information and often results in duplication of some topics and gaps in others.

A vision for career development for the early childhood care and education field needs to be developed, which consists of the following elements:

- Systematic planning which involves an understanding of how the parts—regulation, training delivery and financing—fit together. Many problems in the field stem from gaps in the system. To improve only one part of the system may create a crisis in another part.
- Effective quality controls for the profession. Qualifications should reflect the field's knowledge base, ensure skills, be appropriate for specific roles and be effectively implemented.
- Progressive role-related, appropriate and articulated professional development. A variety of roles exists, but training is essential to help people move into new, increasingly responsible roles. Professional development should be appropriate to specific roles and child care populations and be offered at different levels of knowledge and skills. Real access to these opportunities must exist for all individuals.
- Recognition and reward systems. Increased knowledge and skills should be rewarded with increased responsibility, compensation and status.
- Expanded financing. Funding should be available to help pay for career development while employed.

3. **Training and professional development experiences must be relevant and responsive to individual, family and community needs.**

Professional development should enhance the quality of service and reflect the educational, nurturing role of the practitioner. Training and professional development experiences are most successful when they respond to an individual's background, experiences, and the current context of their role. Professional development should reflect the diversity of the participants and communities it serves. It should build on the knowledge and experience of the caregivers. This principle is particularly important for employed individuals who are investing time and money in training and may feel frustrated when there are few apparent links to their needs. Such congruence is also important in the beginning stages of professional development because it is more difficult to make connections on one's own without a broad foundation of knowledge and skills.

4. **Professional development recognizes developmental levels of staff and should be broadly defined to meet the needs of adult learners. It should incorporate the best practices in adult education and include a range of learning opportunities responsive to all individual learning styles.**

It is essential that the developmental level of each practitioner is recognized and training is planned accordingly. This approach recognizes that individuals function at different conceptual or developmental levels and are at different career stages. They require differentiated learning environments for optimal development. For example, practitioners who are more concrete in their conceptualization or who are in their first year of caregiving will often benefit from a more structured professional development approach. Katz[8] labelled this stage as survival and those in this phase tend to focus on the practical. New practitioners are concerned with what to do in specific situations, rather than on reflecting on philosophical principles or abstract ideas. They need information on what to do, how to do it and the circumstances under which it should be done. They benefit from workshops on specific topics related to interactions with children and visits to other settings. Caregivers at this point in their career appreciate a demonstration of a new skill or practice. They need the support of either a director or mentor to manage their group of children and deal with specific challenges.

The middle stage of career development reflects a consolidation or renewal of skills. Individuals at this phase demonstrate a moderate or high level of abstract thinking. In this group, it is important that professional development activities provide opportunities for alternatives both with respect to content and presentation. Participants appreciate opportunities for group discussion in which they are given the chance to express and elaborate their points of view. There still needs to be assistance available in applying newly learned principles to day-to-day work either from the director or through a peer.

At the other end of the T spectrum, mature individuals who function at a high level of conceptualization or abstraction will appreciate more loosely structured approaches to professional development. It is recognized that democratic decision-making procedures, such as involving the individual in the planning process, are particularly applicable to enable them to express their own uniqueness, knowledge and experience. They expect to focus on the link between theory and practice, philosophical underpinnings and other complex concerns. One effective strategy is involving them in brainstorming and group problem-solving processes. Practitioners at this stage function well in mentoring roles with new or less experienced caregivers. Presentations by these individuals at conferences or workshops provide opportunities to share their expertise and keep them actively involved in the profession.

5. **Organizations offering training and professional development experiences should strive to maintain a balance between ensuring that content meets core information needs (standardization) while being responsive to individual and community needs.**

Effective professional development opportunities are structured to promote clear linkages between theory and practice. Without these linkages, participants may reject new knowledge as "book learning" and prefer an experienced practitioner's information and strategies "that work in the real world."

6. **Training and professional development experiences should be excellent examples of vocational preparation and upgrading which meet defined standards.**

Participants deserve recognition for their participation in formal and organized training—to get acknowledgement for their accomplishment. Organizations offering training should incorporate assessment and evaluation as an intrinsic part both for individual participants and the training program. Program evaluation should be an integral and ongoing part of professional development programs. The effectiveness of professional development needs to be determined. In addition to helping to ensure the accuracy and quality of the material presented, meeting this principle is important for establishing credibility and legitimacy in the eyes of the participants.

Providers of effective professional development experiences should have the appropriate knowledge and experience base. A group facilitator plays a key role. Effective leaders have the following characteristics:

- knowledge of and respect for the early childhood care and education field and several years' experience as a practitioner in the appropriate setting;
- knowledge of child development and early childhood care and education. Comprehensive knowledge is needed to answer participant questions and facilitate discussion;
- knowledge of how adults learn. Instructors offer practical applications and encourage interactions where participants learn from each other;

- ability to form relationships with participants. Successful professional development leaders are warm people who get to know each participant. These relationships encourage participants to question their practice and change their behaviour; and
- experience in giving presentations. Facilitators of professional development need to know a variety of techniques to maximize learning, such as making use of visual aids that are interesting (charts, overheads, videos, slides, teaching resources), asking questions and making use of anecdotes and examples to illustrate points.

7. **Effective professional development experiences use a hands-on approach that encourages participants to learn from one another.**

Professional development experiences should build opportunities for networking and mutual support. In addition to reflecting what is known about effective strategies for teaching adults, meeting this principle has the added benefit of modelling the same type of teaching practices that are effective when working with young children.

Mentoring offers experienced practitioners and directors new encouragement to remain in the field by helping them learn to share their skills with others and to grow in the profession. As well, this professional development experience provides mentors with opportunities to develop their skills in communication, leadership and adult education. Mentor and partner programs help novice practitioners in a practical, supportive way to learn and overcome the hurdles of the first years on the job. Mentorship creates more opportunities for novice caregivers to benefit from field work experience, gain new knowledge and improve their caregiving practices. This approach gives providers personal attention, individual help and validates that a peer is able to help and act as a motivator.

Mentor programs create a new step in the early childhood care and education career progression, enabling a practitioner to advance professionally while continuing to work with children directly. This acknowledges the specialized skill of teaching others to care for and educate young children. By combining this step with financial reward, mentor programs challenge the perception of child care as unskilled work. They provide incentives for adults to continue in the field by providing opportunities for leadership development. Doherty[9] identified several Canadian programs involved in researching mentoring as a professional development strategy in "Mentoring as a Strategy for Promoting Quality in Child Care." For further information on mentoring, please refer to section 1.

8. **Effective professional development experiences contribute to positive self-esteem by acknowledging the skills and resources brought to the training process, as opposed to creating feelings of self-doubt or inadequacy by questioning an individual's current practices.**

Professional development should enhance recognition of the individual and the field, and be sensitive to the need of caregivers to nurture a strong sense of personal identity. The low pay and status of many individuals working with young children already undermine practitioners' self-esteem, which in turn can have negative effects on their interactions with young children. In addition, building upon existing strengths makes it more likely that the new information will be incorporated into the individual's repertoire, while the opposite approach is likely to result in rejecting new information.

9. **Effective professional development experiences provide opportunities for application and reflection, and allow for individuals to be observed and receive feedback on what has been learned.**

Learning is most clearly integrated into an individual's professional repertoire when there are frequent opportunities to use the new information, to reflect upon its meaning and applications, and to receive feedback on how the new knowledge or skill is incorporated into one's practice. Isolated, one-time training events do not provide for such integration and reflection, nor do some formal preparation programs that teach theoretical foundations early on without practicum experience until much later. Opportunities are needed to integrate theory to practice.

10. **Individuals should be involved in the planning and design of their professional development program.**

Caregivers should be partners in the development and management of professional development programs. Meeting this principle helps to ensure that the professional development experiences are tailored to meet individual needs and interests. It also encourages participants to develop a stronger sense of ownership for their learning and reinforces the notion that professional development is an ongoing professional responsibility.

Professional Development Formats

There are four areas of focus for most training and professional development: orientation for new practitioners; on-the-job training for individuals with little or no training in early childhood care and education; career development available to all practitioners; and fine tuning for those who have worked in the field for some time and are skilled at what they do. The strategies employed in training programs will depend on the amount of time and resources available and the content selected. For example, if a small amount of time is scheduled for a refresher course on first aid, the best way to present the information may be in a lecture or with a video presentation.

Kontos[10] reported that workshops and discussion groups may lead to increased knowledge and awareness but alone are unlikely to result in a change in practice. Caregivers seem to know about child development and appropriate teaching strategies, but observations of interactions with children indicate that this knowledge is applied inconsistently. Adults learn best and are willing to change most easily when the processes to be changed are impersonal and at a distance from their own philosophy. Integration of knowledge into practice is the key.

Experienced trainers find that learning takes time: time to adjust to ideas, observe change in children, try out the ideas with children, and take things step by step and not feel forced to venture into uncharted ground. It is easier to apply a series of small steps one at a time, rather than attempt everything at once. Careful sequencing of issues to be learned and applied permits each stage to be integrated over time.

To effect change in caregiver practices, some other form of training is usually required. On-site learning opportunities make it possible for participants to apply immediately what they are learning with a familiar group of children. Lectures and reading appear to be the least useful means to alter interactions with children. Visits and resource lending libraries are the most common supplements to group sessions. Most professional development for family home care providers is conducted in group sessions (workshops, "rap" groups) combined with home visiting. Other family day care training formats include toy/resource lending libraries and neighbourhood resource centres.

Orientation for New Staff in Centre-based Settings

The quality of a new practitioner's first few days on the job can have a lasting effect on the program, children, families and staff. The orientation does not need to be elaborate. The goal is to provide enough information so the person feels welcomed, develops a sense of the structure and goals of the setting and his or her place in it.

A handbook helps new employees become familiar with administrative policies and procedures. Current staff can help new personnel by answering such questions as where to find materials or the first aid kit. By acting as mentors, they can serve as "safe havens" for questions that the new employee may feel foolish asking the supervisor. It is essential to structure time with the supervisor to discuss policies outlined in the handbook and the expectations and responsibilities of the position. The individual can be profiled in program newsletters and introduced at meetings. The time spent building this relationship will contribute to the person feeling respected, valued and part of a team.

On-the-Job Training

This approach is targeted to those with little training or experience with young children. It is the most intensive of all the professional development programs. The supporting staff in the child care setting who guide the learner through the training will need relief from their caregiving duties. The program's success depends on the supervision by individuals who model exemplary caregiving, coupled with on-site personnel who have the time and skills to conduct adult education. In optimal sites where these two criteria are met, on-the-job training can provide invaluable preparation for caregiving because the training can be individualized and paced to meet the learner's demonstrated progress. Expectations for the learner must be clear and realistic. Child development is best learned in an environment with children, in which theory and practice come together.

It may be difficult to find exemplary models. Some child care settings—both centre and home—are ineffective places to acquire teaching caregiving skills. There are some courses on adult education and "train-the-trainer" sessions which have produced some skilled education coordinators. However, there are too few of these courses and most early childhood settings do not have personnel with the necessary time or skills to devote to on-the-job training. This in turn results in a sporadic and inconsistent approach.

Conferences/Workshops/Seminars and Non-credit Courses

Professional conferences and workshops can provide excellent training opportunities for practitioners. It is important that people are notified well in advance of these events, and that their attendance is facilitated by providing time to attend, travel subsidies and registration expenses. Workshops have long been used for professional development in early child care and education settings. For workshops to be effective, they must have:

- topics geared to the interests and developmental needs of the participants;
- multiple options to select from;
- a presenter who is aware of the specific context of the program and the real-life concerns of the participants; and
- sufficient follow-up to support individuals in integrating their ideas into day-to-day practice on the job.

On-site workshops are useful mechanisms for encouraging direct involvement of participants in a specific content area. Implicit in the workshop concept is that those who attend participate actively in the session. Often, workshops are planned for participants who want to learn more about curriculum areas such as imbedding an anti-bias approach or music in the classroom. Other areas, such as building skills for more effective interactions with parents or volunteers, can also be handled in a workshop format that involves participants in role plays or simulation games. Workshops require the active involvement of participants and are therefore more suitable for some training needs than lectures or videos.

Almost all provincial and national early childhood care and education organizations hold conferences, workshops and seminars for their members. The sessions usually focus on child-specific topics, such as guiding behaviour or programming, with some sessions on administration or management issues. Virtually all licensed family day care providers reported that first aid/CPR training was available in their locality.[11] Courses related to nutrition, child development and guiding behaviour were also seen as more available than those related to children with special needs. Practitioners want workshop topics to be applicable to their specific setting and geared to their level of knowledge and experience.

Resource Centres

Stimulating regular professional reading and self-study by caregivers is an important professional development strategy. To provide on-site materials, it is helpful to have access to a professional library and resource centre. Support can be provided through an area stocked with books, journals and other resources. This can be part of a staff room or available to family day care providers through lending libraries. Development of a resource file can facilitate practitioners searching for articles and ideas. Recent copies of professional journals and newsletters should be made available, along with collections of audiovisual materials which can provide a rich resource on topics such as curriculum development or behaviour guidance. When caregivers have materials and space to work, they are more likely to develop individualized teacher-made materials. There should be space for caregivers to make materials, big books, games and charts. Supplies such as paper, scissors and marking pens should be available. In community resource centres, it is useful to have a laminating machine, a computer and printer to make shapes and letters for charts.

The importance of becoming a sensitive observer is an essential part of learning about how to care for young children appropriately and effectively. Video tapes can support the development of observational skills. Videotaped material can draw the viewer's attention to the subtleties of a young child's behaviour and help caregivers be more sensitive observers. Building in a follow-up problem-solving session based on assigned readings deepens the usefulness of publications and provides an opportunity for staff to articulate application of theory to practice.

Observations/Visits

Visits to other settings are vital parts of a total professional development program. Watching other adults and children is refreshing and interesting. This strategy involves practitioners observing their own or another's playroom at different points in the day. After visits, they bring back program ideas, new and different ways to set up a physical environment, and sometimes renewed interest in developing curriculum materials. Some caregivers, who are

able to move beyond the more obvious things such as equipment or curriculum ideas, may begin to compare and contrast environments and teaching strategies, relating these differences to variations in the stated philosophies. Follow-up group discussions can help staff refine their understanding of how theory relates to practice. Group discussions also encourage caregivers to re-examine their theoretical basis for their work setting and re-evaluate curriculum to ascertain how closely it reflects the stated philosophy of the setting and their own philosophy. Involving a resource person to facilitate data collection/interpretation, procedural problems and implications can be useful.

In family day care, agency visitors periodically visit home caregivers. Trainers go individually to providers for home visits. Frequency may be determined by the desired amount of change in the individual caregiver behaviour. This strategy serves caregivers' need for some outside contact. However, individual visits are time consuming and reduce the number of caregivers that can be trained.

Portfolios

The use of portfolios as a training vehicle involves an advisor documenting observations of the provider at work and includes recommendations for continued growth. In addition, providers contribute written documentation. Providers describe "what was happening in their playroom? and "why do I do what I do?" This approach documents what an experienced educator believes is important and stimulates reflection. Portfolios provide an opportunity for the participants to examine how they meet standards in local conditions.

Technology

Technology is widely used to instruct those who live and work at a distance from the professional development setting and practitioners who, because of family responsibilities or professional commitment, may not be able to leave work to pursue professional development. Lectures, discussions and enhanced programming may be presented to participants via videotape which is relatively inexpensive. Many participants watch the tape in their home at their convenience.

Computers are used for communication between participant and trainer or between practitioners themselves. Using systems such as the Internet and e-mail, participants can access a wide range of services from their home computer through telephone modems. This system enables "conversations" between two or more parties at any given time, allowing for didactic instruction or simultaneous teleconferencing between a facilitator and a group of participants. This system enables immediate or prompt response to questions, course assignments and the freedom to access the system when it is most convenient.

Model Professional Development Programs

This section highlights five Canadian professional development programs. The first two are targeted at front-line practitioners in home and centre-based environments using technology. The third program involves self-reflection on practice and feedback from peers for child care administrators. In the last two models, there is a residential component to facilitate networking among participants. The University of Victoria's summer institutes are aimed at administrators, researchers and government policy analysts, whereas the National Great Teacher's seminar targets faculty.

TVOntario's Virtual Classroom—Professional Development for Child Care Staff

This project involves an interactive, inquiry-based environment for teachers of children from birth to five years of age across Ontario. TVO partnered with community stakeholders who provide curriculum content, accredit and credential the program. The project currently in development has four sessions: Speech and Language; Responding to Abuse; Celebrating Diversity; and Guiding Behaviour.

The technology involves a system called AREL, which enables an instructor to communicate with the participants at the various sites as well as with each other through a closed circuit television with two-way voice and computer connections to provide an interactive approach to learning. Learners use a touch-tone phone for voice and data transmission to answer questions and to communicate with the teacher/facilitator and other participants. Among the curriculum-based services are opportunities to question experts directly; special events and virtual field trips; direct learning at a distance; video clips; and feedback to participants on quiz items. Through the interactive technology, participants get personal and immediate feedback.

There are 25 sites located in schools across the province which are available to community groups such as child care staff after school hours. Among the benefits, early childhood care and education participants are able to participate locally in province-wide professional development activities otherwise unavailable due to distance or cost; share their learning resources, strategies and activities; "meet" other staff and experts; experience virtual field trips to places not easily visited; and access a wide selection of relevant resources.

The Hanen Program for Early Childhood Educators

The international Hanen Program[12] provides caregivers in child care settings with intensive on-site training in how to facilitate children's social, language and literacy development. The program is conducted by a certified speech-language pathologist and consists of a

combination of seven group training sessions and six individual videotaping sessions with feedback.

The Hanen Program provides caregivers with experiential training, focussing on strategies and practices that enhance children's everyday activities and routines. The program derives its theoretical base from a social interactionalist perspective, which proposes that a child's active engagement in frequent, reciprocal social interactions is critical for language acquisition. The program's intensive, experiential format is designed to foster long-term behaviour change in practitioners and enable them to meet the needs of children with special needs, children with language delays, and the children who are at risk for such delays. This process is facilitated by enabling individuals to apply this information in their own work setting and in everyday situations and providing ongoing support and consultation throughout the program. Resource materials are available, including books and videotapes.

The program has found that the support of the child care administrator is critical in providing guidance to staff, videotaping caregivers and making the tapes a focus of discussion at caregiver meetings. The overall response to this program has been positive; caregivers report increased confidence in their ability to provide care for children, regardless of their abilities or disabilities.

Child Care Administrator Certification Project

This project targets child care administrators, a group whose unique professional development needs are often overlooked. Through a reflective process developed by Child Care Connections - Nova Scotia, the candidates focus on their practice, growth and development. In the first step of PLA, the individual develops a portfolio, matching his or her learning to identified criteria. This process enables the administrator to identify both strengths as well as gaps in skills, knowledge and attitudes. Through this process, the individual develops a learning plan which identifies how she or he will strengthen those areas previously identified. There are case studies that address the areas of competence needed by an administrator in the relationship areas of staff, families, licensed operators (owners or board of directors) and community. In responding to case studies, the individual examines the practice areas of systems, policies and procedures, programs and services, legal and professional sanctions, planning and finances. The candidate's response is evaluated by peers, an evaluator and the candidate. The individual reflects upon his or her own practice in relation to stated criteria through journal entries. Using a variety of tools to aid reflection, an individual is able to document progress, learn from colleagues and develop strategies to aid practice. This project enables child care administrators to be recognized for the complexity of the work they do and to present themselves as accountable and responsible for their practice.

University of Victoria Summer Institutes

Since 1989, there have been six summer institutes which have brought together international and Canadian leaders to research and discuss concepts of quality child care. These events are designed to reach the professional at the mid-point of his or her career, such as administrators, government policy analysts and researchers. The environment is designed to be conducive to exploration of issues and concerns that are not typically scheduled at more traditional professional development events. The organizer's intent is to provoke some controversy in a positive, creative way and in a safe environment, stimulating learning and opportunities to network. The institute lasts one and a half to two weeks for about five hours a day, enabling participants to explore the surrounding area and take discussions beyond the institute to more informal environments. The attendees bring as much expertise to the sessions as the presenters. In addition to gaining new information, participants are exposed to ideas and theory with an applied aspect. Presenters have come from Europe, United States and Canada.

National Great Teacher's Seminar

These seminars are directed to community college, institute and university educators. They include a variety of subject matters, and encourage discussion and reflection on the current challenges facing them in postsecondary settings. The participants learn to explore teaching strategies, innovations, problems and solutions. The theme underlying the activities is to characterize and define what makes a "great teacher." This event encourages educators to venture beyond the limits of their own specialization and environments in search of transferable ideas and the universals of teaching. A process of introspection and self-appraisal in a relaxed, open environment invites participants to reflect on their attitudes, methods and behaviour as teachers. This environment stimulates an exchange of information and ideas and contributes to an expanding network among faculty. Participants bring the following with them to the seminar: a technique or tool that works well; something that is still a challenge; a "trick" from their teaching bag; and a book, article or resource that has influenced their teaching strategies or philosophy. These events take place in a residential environment from three days to a week. There are several of these seminars in North America and two are held annually in Canada in Alberta and Ontario.

Conditions Needed for Successful Implementation

There is a need to address the many barriers to professional development, such as a lack of money, varying motivation levels, scheduling problems, limited availability or accessibility of appropriate professional development opportunities, and a mismatch between language and literacy expectations and skills.

Administrators may be surprised to find that people do not always take advantage of career development opportunities, especially when money for enrolment has been allocated to support training. Some, however, who do not respond to opportunities at one time, may be candidates at another. Formal schooling may also have meant academic failure and negative experiences with teachers. For many practitioners, participation in training represents exposure to an untried experience and a potential challenge to self-esteem. Sometimes, there is underlying peer pressure not to become involved in anything beyond what is required. Such individuals do not understand how professional development can benefit them or the children with whom they work. Factors related to one's personal life can also be a deterrent.

Availability

In "What Do We Know about ECCE Training in Canada,"[13] Chandler reported the unique training needs and limited availability for the many areas of specialization within the field, including family resource centre staff, administrators and those working with a range of ages and settings. Other areas requiring additional professional development are the many early childhood educators working with cultural, linguistic and racial diversity and with children with special needs. She observed that practitioners in each program type, with a variety of populations, roles and levels, need to have the specialized knowledge and skills gained through training and professional development. Canada needs to develop a vision and plan for a coordinated system of professional development such as "A Conceptual Framework for Early Childhood Professional Development," adopted as the position statement of the National Association for the Education of Young Children.[14]

For family day care providers, most of the training available is through a specific agency or system. However, most caregivers do not participate in any formalized system, and thus experience difficulty in accessing training and other professional development opportunities. However, Ontario and British Columbia may be the exceptions. In a survey conducted by the National Family Day Care Training Project,[15] Ontario provided the greatest availability of training opportunities in the unregulated sector through resource centres and other organizations. For those providers willing to participate in a registration process with the Child Care Resource and Referral Programs in British Columbia, there will be increased access to training. In other parts of Canada, only five organizations reported providing family day care training. Two were located in Nova Scotia, two in Newfoundland and one in Saskatchewan. The survey reported that there was little available for caregivers who were new to the field and even less for the caregiver who wants more depth around specific areas or refresher courses around the basics.

Accessibility

Caregivers, trainers, program staff and key informants all identified accessibility issues as the greatest barrier to participation in professional development events.[16] The scheduling of

training sessions for practitioners can have a strong effect on the likelihood of initial participation and persistence in training activities and programs. Training scheduled for late afternoon, evening or on weekends is an important way to ensure access to training, short of hiring substitutes and providing release time. Some centre-based practitioners did feel they would be more likely to attend events scheduled during work hours.

About 22 percent of regulated home child care providers reported that they had not participated in workshops or training activities during the past 12 months.[17] Conflict with care needs of providers' own children was the most frequently stated reason for non-participation. Providers also felt they already had sufficient training/qualifications, that the timing of the activity conflicted with their child care work, or that the activities were too costly. Some training programs, however, do provide care for the children that participants bring with them.

The accessibility of training locations to public transportation can be a major incentive or deterrent to participation. Early childhood practitioners located in rural and remote areas are not well served by training resources. As well, they are exposed to geographical and psychological isolation and their needs and interests may differ.

Morris[18] reported that various forms of distance education can address the accessibility issue in rural and remote communities. Professional development programs such as TVOntario's Virtual Classroom described in the section on model programs can be used to facilitate accessibility. In addition to being self-directed, it can meet the needs of adult learners who need the flexibility to structure learning around work and family responsibilities.

Affordablity

Strategies such as financial assistance, granting recognition for knowledge and skills gained through experiential learning, and meaningful increases in compensation linked to completion of professional development and improved performance will enhance the likelihood that more people will participate.

Many practitioners pay for their own professional development. When funds are available, they rarely cover the costs of transportation, substitutes, release time or materials. Practitioners all over the country spend considerable hours of their own time in workshops, conferences and meetings. Generally, practitioners participating in college credit programs pay their own tuition. The cost of professional development is usually borne solely by the individual family day care provider.

Not only do practitioners appear to subsidize their own training, but many workshop leaders defray costs by providing training and receiving no remuneration. From conference presentations, with no financial recognition to presenters, to workshops offered at nominal

cost, the training community subsidizes the true cost of professional development. Resource centres, agencies, associations and child care resource and referral agencies, which are the main providers of professional development, are resource poor and struggle to provide a range of necessary services.

Many practitioners also express concern over the lack of financial incentives for their investments in ECCE training. This is true across the board for practitioners, program administrators and other specialized positions. In many fields, people invest in their own training when they see it producing some chance to increase compensation. Among the lack of incentives are low salaries and the perception of the field as "dead end." These problems are compounded because there is so little money to pay for professional development—let alone underwrite the rewards.

Program administrators find it difficult to pay for training and to provide salary. An additional problem is staff turnover, causing agencies to continually invest limited dollars in basic training. There is concern that available professional development funds are spent largely to meet minimal training requirements. In this way, licensing requirements drive training dollars. There needs to be funding available for events beyond the preservice level.

Community colleges also face challenges with limited funds available. To provide specialized training, a certain number of people need to be registered to offer professional development seminars. College administrators are reluctant to invest limited program development dollars and promotion of topic areas that will unlikely draw adequate registration.

Many practitioners are not aware of the full cost of quality professional development programs. Events historically were partially or wholly subsidized by grants such as the Child Care Initiative Fund. These funds have dried up. Consequently, when an individual is presented with a fee based on cost recovery, including paying the workshop leaders and the cost of the facility, she or he is dismayed by the price. Many child care organizations have found with the drying up of subsidies (usually government) for conferences, they are unable to attract a large number of participants. Some are opting for smaller, more regional sessions. This complicates the ability to provide a range of topics to meet the needs and interests of a diverse field.

Relevance

The content of professional development needs to address the full spectrum of needs of the early childhood care and education field. Often, training is geared toward front-line, centre-based practitioners who work with a diverse population of children three to five years

of age. The children served range from infants to school-aged. The range of roles has expanded to home-based providers, centre directors and those working with specialized populations. The children and families being served throughout Canada represent an increasingly broad range of racial, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. There is also the impact of adult problems, such as poverty, family violence and substance abuse.

Mulligan V. and Associates[19] stated that ECCE training programs ought to be excellent examples of adult education. Practitioners who participate in training are adult learners. The structure and design must respond to their specific challenges to be effective. Adult learners often present knowledge representing a mixture of academic, personal and employment experiences which are unique to them as individuals and may not fit typical definitions or expectations of beginning, intermediate and advanced skills. Their prior learning can enhance their new learning and may be substantial enough in many areas to deserve recognition such as that provided through PLA processes. Programs should be developmentally appropriate for adult learners, founded on the assumption that participants have valuable prior learning and life experience. In addition, professional development opportunities should be planned with the awareness that adult learners have many responsibilities in addition to their professional development.

A U.S. survey[20] found that a vast majority of non-credit training is entry level and repetitive. In discussions with key informants, the authors found similar problems in available professional development in Canada. Most training was geared to entry level and offered repetitively, both in topics and use of the same presenters.

Recognition of professional development

There is little incentive for pursuing additional professional development unless the increased qualifications are recognized with improved compensation. Individuals alone cannot be expected to bear all additional costs. Limited training funds are most effectively spent when they are linked to salary enhancement, which can reduce the turnover among well-trained, experienced workers, and when they provide concrete opportunities for career mobility.

Caring for a Living[21] and *Making a Career of It*[22] revealed a lack of monetary reward for the completion of training. In the survey conducted by the National Family Day Care Training Project,[23] recognition issues were a constant theme—recognition of the value of caregiving, the caregiver's prior experience and education (both formal and informal training) and the value of professional development. Much of the training that the caregivers participated in was not part of a formal program and was largely undocumented and unrecognized. In the survey, only 34 of the 258 respondents had taken a formal, multi-session training program leading to a certificate.

Conclusion

The field needs a strong commitment to professional development so that practitioners can meet the ever-expanding needs of the population and the variety of settings in which they work. Upgrading the level of professionalism among early child care and education practitioners demands the standards be raised. Individuals need to make a commitment to career development as an ongoing professional responsibility. In addition, the field needs to work toward a framework for professional development which conceptualizes how regulation, training delivery and financing come together.

To achieve this, barriers need to be addressed. More resources need to be available, and the availability of professional development opportunities needs to be increased for practitioners at all levels and in a variety of roles. There needs to be time provided during the work day for practitioners to reflect on their experiences, consult with others, examine resources and plan new ways of working with young children and their families. Increased knowledge and skills achieved should be rewarded with increased responsibility, compensation and status. The developmental needs of early childhood care and education personnel should be addressed by providing time and resources for workshop attendance and course work. There needs to be recognition for the knowledge and skills gained through experiential learning and meaningful increases in compensation for the completion of professional development. These are not new recommendations, but they continue to be neglected.

Little is known about the potential long-term implications of training, including changes in children's behaviour or development, retention and relationships with parents. Further study is required to determine the degree to which professional development influences the quality of care. Process quality (focussing on the caregiver's interactions with children) did not improve after training.[24] Professional development experiences need to meet defined standards, ensure that facilitators have the appropriate knowledge and skills to be adult educators, and evaluate events.

Perhaps the most difficult challenge is to change the widespread misconception that work with young children can be carried out effectively without the benefit of specialized knowledge. To the extent that a "love of children" is viewed as sufficient background for entry into the early childhood care and education field, efforts to provide professional education and ongoing professional development will continue to face an uphill battle.

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PART 7

Valuing Innovations in Early Childhood Care and Education Training

by Joanne Morris

Abstract

Joanne Morris, editor of this publication, brings the whole picture together by summing up the previous sections. She discusses briefly the different points of view as they relate to innovative training opportunities in early childhood care and education.

Overview

There is growing recognition of the importance of the care and education of young children. Early childhood practitioners have traditionally been trained at the community college level to work in child care centres to provide care and education to children who range from birth to 12 years of age. Research into child care has demonstrated that young children are being cared for in a variety of formal and informal settings. Students who enrol in ECCE training have diverse backgrounds and needs and so do the children and families with whom they work. Learning as a human process rather than a formal structure or system is central to meeting the educational needs of children and adults.

ECCE training in Canada offers several interesting innovations in program delivery. ECCE training is unique in that there is a direct relationship between the ways that adults are educated and how they integrate those approaches when they work with young children. Its purpose is to prepare knowledgeable, reflective practitioners who design and deliver developmentally appropriate experiences for young children. Young children's care and education will determine whether they will become eager learners who have the self-esteem, skills and strategies to learn, work and become effective, responsible citizens. The process of lifelong learning begins at birth. Society's responsibility is to recognize the importance of the early childhood years to future generations, and to ensure that the most

effective preparation of practitioners takes place today. This preparation has been discussed throughout this publication, highlighting various innovations in Canadian community college ECCE programs which have been designed to meet the changing needs of practitioners during their career paths.

Educational leaders have called upon the need to emphasize people and learning rather than institutions and teaching.[1] They have described ways of reforming postsecondary training to meet the diverse needs of learners who enter and exit formal educational programs throughout their careers. Upon re-entry, adult learners bring knowledge learned from experience and seek higher-level learning to help prepare them for the complexities of the workplace. The role of educational institutions is changing as a result of post-industrialist needs of society as we approach the 21st century. There is greater emphasis to work with community agencies, professional associations and sector councils to establish standards of practice and educational requirements. It has been suggested that the institutions should concentrate on the teaching–learning process, and leave credentialling to these types of community agencies.[2]

In ECCE training programs, change has been under way for some time. Early childhood care and education is seldom given the credit it deserves as a leader in educational reform, partly because it is still emerging as a profession and is generally undervalued by society. While science and mathematics are viewed by higher education as necessary disciplines for success in the world, the care and education of the youngest of our children are viewed as applied sciences, often considered "soft" and requiring lower-level education. As we move into the 21st century, a change of attitude is becoming apparent. The readings in this publication discuss some successful case studies of innovations in ECCE training. Imbedded in developmental theory, in many ways they are on the leading edge of educational practice.

The National Child Care Sector Study, *Our Child Care Workforce: From Recognition to Remuneration*,[3] is an in-depth study of the occupation, including its human resource and training issues. Many participants involved in the study are seeking educational strategies, such as PLAR, distance education and the need for ongoing professional development opportunities. The study will hopefully be a catalyst for change toward the legitimization of the work of early childhood practitioners, a revamping of funding sources for service delivery, and informative for educational institutions so that they may respond to practitioners' needs.

Themes and Complementary Applications

Interesting and exciting possibilities can derive from the thought-provoking case studies. Each topic has been explored is such a way as to provide the reader with information and ideas for

application to other educational settings. There is a clear focus on the relationship of education to practice, and the impact of training on the quality of care that practitioners provide to children. The field of early childhood care and education can be strengthened through the application of any of these topics and, interestingly, the innovations can work together in many ways to offer practitioners new and appropriate ways to develop as professionals. Throughout the sections on innovative program delivery models, three main themes arise: accountability; the diversity of learners' needs; and the ongoing need for professional development.

Accountability

Accountability is an underlying theme in each of the chapters, and is an important issue in the discussion on innovations in education. There is comfort in knowing that traditional approaches have been used for many years and that they have worked. However, we have moved into a post-industrial era, where we now have to look beyond the institution to decide to whom education needs to be accountable. In the case of ECCE training, the potential for an internship model proposed by JoAnne Hurst has implications beyond the institution. As proposed, internship takes the educational experience into a workplace setting, credentialled by a professional body and supervised by faculty from an institution. This would require a new partnering structure, with a professional body establishing the standards of practice and issuing the recognized credential. In Canada, there is currently no professional organization in early childhood care and education that has this mandate, although some possibilities worth considering would be an extension of an existing organization, or a sector council. The function of a sector council is currently being explored as a result of a recommendation of the National Child Care Sector Study, *Our Child Care Workforce: From Recognition to Remuneration*.[4]

Internship also raises accountability issues for the profession to establish and maintain ongoing professional development opportunities. As discussed by Karen Chandler, some existing professional development activities are not always relevant or appropriate for the audiences. The recognition of experience and basic level of content could be addressed for some practitioners interested in pursuing an internship for further learning and development. Practitioners could establish their own learning objectives, select the placement in conjunction with the supervising faculty, and would have personal choice in their career path on the appropriate timing and a particular choice of specialized learning to pursue during the internship.

Accountability to the learner is very significant in Judy Pollard's chapter on practicum. Although some may question why practicum is included in a publication on innovations in training, her in-depth study of the relationship that exists between the sponsor educator

and the student is the first of its kind in British Columbia, and informs faculty about the considerations necessary for student success in practicum. In many educational institutions, the considerations are sometimes limited to ensuring that the site is licensed, of acceptable quality and that there is a willingness to supervise students in placement. Mentoring approaches as proposed by Carmella Singleton demonstrate the importance of preparing the mentor or sponsor educator in the practicum placement. This preparation increases the likelihood of a compatible relationship; one which considers the setting, the people and the practice, and builds accountability to students, the staff at the centre and the educational institution.

PLAR and distance education must ensure that the standards of the college and the profession are upheld. As Marilyn Morrice points out, the assessment methods used to evaluate the learning which derives from experience must be reliable and valid. They must involve a variety of ways to assess different types of learning, and assure that the learning is equivalent to outcomes in the classroom. In distance education, where students study off-campus, learning materials must be current, the use of technology appropriate for the content, practicum supervised and assessment methods reliable and valid.

Diversity of Learners' Needs

Learners in postsecondary ECCE programs are different today than in the past. They are typically older, have families, need to further their work through upgrading or professional development, and have access to a variety of media resources that allow them to remain independent and off-site from formal full-time schooling. PLAR can translate into formal course credits (exemptions) and/or be used to attain certification status. Learners can enter their training at the most appropriate level rather than repeat the acquisition of entry-level knowledge offered through most full-time college programs.

Distance education facilitates independent, self-paced learning and encourages self-evaluation. In doing so, learners are less likely to compare their achievements with one another, and more likely to assess their progress in relation to the stated learning outcomes. The variety of media and resources available to distance learners can also help to meet different learning styles, language and cultural backgrounds. Often, distance learners are working in child care and can immediately apply their new knowledge and develop their practice in the context of their workplace. Mentoring has many possibilities for distance learners. The isolation sometimes experienced in distance education can be overcome if a suitably qualified and trained mentor could be available for workplace visits, practicum evaluation and support while studying course work. A mentor could

facilitate guided journal writing and provide ongoing feedback and regular conferencing, thereby encouraging reflective practice and meaningful, individualized learning.

To meet the differing needs of learners, workshops, seminars, in-depth institutes and internships can provide a variety of choices. PLAR is a process that assists individuals in analysing and describing the knowledge gained from experience and in establishing a professional development plan. A mature learner, as described in Judy Pollard's practicum study, is an example of how matching the styles of sponsor educators and learners can assist learners at different stages of their professional development. Distance education may be the choice of those who prefer to study from home or their community. With access to a child care setting or their places of employment for practice opportunities, they can effectively integrate the knowledge they gain through their studies. At varying stages of one's career in early childhood care and education, an individual may develop professional practices through a mentor relationship, where a more experienced individual coaches and nurtures the professional development of a less experienced practitioner. Innovations in education are significant in meeting the diversity of learners' needs in college programs.

Professional Development

The two themes of accountability and meeting the diversity of learners' needs are evident in an over-arching recognition for the profession to have access to a wide variety of educational opportunities. In each of the innovative program delivery models, there is recognition of the importance of instilling the skills and strategies of critical self-reflection into the training of early childhood practitioners. It is also evident that professional development is an ongoing process within the field of early childhood care and education. Innovations in education offer some interesting possibilities in response to this need.

Mentor training includes specific mentor preparation in reflective practice. The mentor becomes better prepared to work with a protégé and instil critical self-reflection as a means of professional development. It can take place in formal educational settings such as colleges, and in informal settings such as workplaces and through professional involvement.

Through the PLAR process, they demonstrate their current competencies and can more effectively establish their own learning goals. This is a reflective process which reinforces the learners' strengths and motivates them to work independently toward their goals. PLAR offers opportunities to strengthen the profession of early childhood practitioners by validating the wealth of learning that takes place during work

experiences. As learners become empowered to develop their own learning plans which result in either college credit or certification recognition, the professional is strengthened from within. Individuals who receive the recognition for their knowledge learned outside formal classroom settings are further encouraged to pursue formal studies in identified areas.

Distance education may meet the needs of some learners who cannot access on-site educational opportunities. Mature learners prefer increased access to a variety of professional development opportunities and still value the networking that facilitates sharing of personal stories. Professional support systems such as tutoring, conferences, peer study groups and workshops enhance the development of reflective thinking in distance education students. Delivery methods can also offer the flexibility sought by family child care practitioners.

Practicum may occur for students at a variety of stages in their career paths, and is enhanced by the considerations necessary for the relationship between the learner and the field placement sponsor. The research presented by Judy Pollard can also affect internship opportunities which could be developed to offer progressive approaches to graduate placements. In addition, a variety of seminar and workshop formats can help early childhood practitioners to take the time to reflect on their interactions with young children and their daily practices in child care settings.

Accountability and meeting the diverse needs of learners are complementary facets of the same goal, which is to ensure quality training for early childhood practitioners. Innovations in education can increase access to learning opportunities, and must meet sound educational standards and the needs of developing professionals.

Next Steps

Research and evaluation play a significant role in furthering what we engage in for educational purposes. Some of the innovative program delivery models presented in these readings are currently involved in research projects. Mentoring and PLAR are being further researched in national studies in Canada. Exploring strategies and solutions to issues in practicum are subjects of study in British Columbia. The National Sector Study, *Our Child Care Workforce: From Recognition to Remuneration*,[5] recommends further research and evaluation of distance education and its application to a wide variety of training needs among practitioners. Consideration for research into the application of mentoring to distance education has potential to strengthen the learning process. JoAnne Hurst recommends that the application of internship to ECCE training be piloted in a

project that could bring together the appropriate partners and begin to offer a new alternative for learners.

These program delivery models can be combined in a variety of ways to reduce the barriers often experienced by practitioners in this field. For many, the fundamental barriers of low wages and lack of funding supports for education remain deterrents to professional development. In addition, the inherent problem of early childhood care and education being an underfunded service means that practitioners seldom realize an increase in wages as a result of higher educational achievements. Publicly funded postsecondary educational institutions are an important part of the infrastructure needed to ensure quality early childhood care and education. They offer learners access to a variety of learning resources and programs, and different types of financial arrangements. This system can also benefit from further research into accreditation of ECCE programs to increase the likelihood of transferability of academic credits across jurisdictions.

Current research through colleges and universities needs to focus on evaluating student outcomes as a result of participation in innovative programs designed to enhance their learning opportunities. These findings will help to inform the refinement and future development of program delivery models which are appropriate for education in this field. Community representatives, students, parents, administrators, government and faculty need to work together to ensure appropriate input and outcomes of training in early childhood care and education.

Endnotes

1. Fullan, 1993; Gallagher, 1995.
2. Gallagher, 1995.
3. Beach, Bertrand & Cleveland, 1998.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.

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Models, Modes and Methods

Field Work in Early Childhood Care and Education Training Programs

by Adele Ritch and Dianne Liscumb

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Abstract

This study looks at the field work models and practices at 31 colleges in both urban and rural areas across Canada. Interviews were held with the coordinators of ECCE training programs at all sites.

Typical approaches to field work are documented and innovative approaches developed by some particular colleges are explored in greater depth. There appears to be a growing trend toward establishing and nurturing partnerships with sponsor educators, to develop respectful and effective field site selection processes, and to address the needs of special student populations, such as First Nations and working students.

Introduction

Research substantiates that practicum is the single most powerful intervention in professional preparation.[1] Most practitioners, as well as most college faculty and students in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) field, view practicum (often referred to as field work), as the most important part of the course.[2]

Practicum experiences in ECCE training programs are intended to provide students with opportunities to observe and practise the application of the theoretical concepts in actual early childhood education and care settings. Students need these opportunities to acquire skills related to program planning and interactions with children and families.[3] While there is agreement that field work experiences are crucial learning opportunities for students, studies report significant challenges related to the implementation of the field work component.[4] Because of the importance of field work experience, the student practicum component must be a primary area for exploration.

In a literature review[5] undertaken for the recently released Child Care Sector Study, *Our Child Care Workforce: From Recognition to Remuneration*,[6] Beach, Bertrand and Cleveland observe that the connection between caregiver education and the quality of care that children receive is clear; it is well supported by the research evidence. At the same time, this study also reported a lack of research evidence to suggest which approaches to field work are associated with high-quality care and education for young children. However, in order for the ECCE field to properly address the question of which specific field work practices lead to higher-quality care of children, it is necessary to first have an understanding of the range of field work practices used in Canadian ECCE training programs. To date, little research has been conducted to document the variety of approaches to ECCE practicum or field work currently in use across the country.

This study explores some of the variations in approaches to field work in ECCE training programs in Canada. Typical approaches to field work are documented and innovative approaches developed by some particular colleges are explored in greater detail. This paper focusses attention on the description of the range of approaches to field work used by 31 Canadian colleges offering ECCE training programs, identifying some common elements of field work and highlighting aspects that seem innovative or unique. As a result of this research, several key themes related to the field work component of ECCE programs emerged. This report focusses on six particular topics:

Topic One: Structure of Field Work Placements
Topic Two: Expected Learning Outcomes of Field Work
Topic Three: Role of Sponsor Educators in Field Work Placements
Topic Four: Selection of Sites for Field Work Placements
Topic Five: Student Assessment During Field Work Placements
Topic Six: Field Work Placements for Special Student Populations

The result is a "collage of descriptive snapshots" of typical approaches to field work, common challenges faced by colleges implementing field work and some of the innovative approaches adopted by particular colleges to address these challenges. This report provides ECCE faculty throughout the country with a picture of field work practices which may be useful in determining future directions for their own programs. It is hoped that readers will contact colleges regarding specific points of interest (Appendix 1).

Methodology

To establish a context for the study of field work practices, this investigation began with a review of the existing literature related to the practicum component of ECCE training programs. This review underscored the need for research to describe current field work

practices in Canadian ECCE training programs and highlight innovations developed by colleges to respond to a variety of related challenges.

Thirty-one community colleges from across Canada were selected as sites of inquiry into the practicum or field work component of their ECCE training programs. Sites were selected from lists of colleges provided by the Canadian Child Care Federation (CCCF) and the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) and through consultation with knowledgeable leaders in the field. Selected sites were intended to reflect the range of regional diversity across the country. In addition, each of the 31 coordinators interviewed was asked to identify other colleges which had developed innovative practices. The 10 coordinators who suggested such innovative sites identified only colleges that were already included in the sample.

The coordinator of the ECCE training program at each of the 31 sites was invited to participate in the research. A letter in English or French (as appropriate) was faxed to each of the coordinators providing information about the ACCC/CCCF Program of Research and inviting them to participate. The letter informed them that a researcher would call to schedule an interview.

The researcher called each coordinator to schedule a mutually agreeable time for the interview. Over a three-week period, the researcher conducted a semi-structured telephone interview of 20 to 30 minutes with each coordinator. From this set of 31 interviews, information about the range of practicum approaches, implementation challenges and responses was gathered in the following six areas of interest:

- the basic structure of field work that had been adopted by the college;
- the broad learning outcomes identified for participants in field work;
- the criteria used by the college in selecting practicum placement sites;
- the approach used to assess student field work;
- the particular challenges related to the field work component; and
- the innovative practices used in the field work component.

Analysis of the data from these interviews provided an understanding of what constitutes "typical" practice and identified several innovative approaches to field work used by some ECCE programs to address particular challenges. To explore these innovative features more deeply, coordinators from 14 of the original 31 programs were asked to participate in a second telephone interview. These interviews focussed on the particular area of innovation which had been identified for each of these training programs. Interview questions were designed to:

- elicit a detailed description of the innovation;
- identify the factors that led to the development of the innovation;

- explain the assumptions that underlie the innovation;
- detail the actual implementation of the innovation; and
- discuss the impacts of the innovation for the college, the students, the sponsor educator,[7] the children and families, the ECCE field and the broader community.

Information from both sets of interviews form the basis of the field work practices described in this paper. In this study, interviews were conducted only with the coordinators of college ECCE training programs. This focus was necessary to obtain a picture of the range of practices and innovations related to the field work component of ECCE training programs. Further research is recommended to gain deeper understanding of the effects that these field work practices have on student learning and on the quality of care subsequently provided to children.

Research Findings

The topics related to field work in ECCE training programs explored by this research are:

Topic One: Structure of Field Work Placements
Topic Two: Expected Learning Outcomes of Field Work
Topic Three: Role of Sponsor Educators in Field Work Placements
Topic Four: Selection of Sites for Field Work Placements
Topic Five: Student Assessment During Field Work Placements
Topic Six: Field Work Placements for Special Student Populations

Each of these topics is introduced with a general discussion of the issue, references to relevant literature and examples of typical approaches used by the colleges that participated in this study. Following this overview is an account of some innovative approaches developed by a few of the participating colleges to address challenges related to the particular topic area.

Topic One: Structure of Field Work Placements

Structure of field work placements includes not only the actual number of placements and the number of hours spent in placements, but also the configuration of settings that students are permitted or required to visit. Responses to a survey conducted by the Child Care Sector Study, *Our Child Care Workforce: From Recognition to Remuneration: Innovative Training Programs in Early Childhood Care and Education*,[8] indicated that delivery models for ECCE training vary across provincial and territorial jurisdictions and even among individual institutions within the same jurisdiction. This same sector study identified that all Canadian certificate and diploma ECCE programs include a supervised field placement component but

that the number of individual practicum placements, the total number of hours in field work placements and the types of settings used for these placements differ among institutions.

Data from this study substantiated the findings of the Child Care Sector Study regarding the structure of field placements. Key informants from the 31 participating colleges were asked to describe the basic structure of the field work component of their own training program. In general, they reported on the length of the study period, the number of field work hours, the number of field work placements and the configuration of placements. A summary of this information is provided below.

Number of Field Work Hours and Number of Field Work Placements

As seen in the charts below, there seems to be very little relationship between the length of the study period, the number of hours students spend in practicum settings and the total number of placements to which they are assigned. During their study periods which range from nine months to three years, students participate in three to six field placements. Colleges also report that students spend anywhere from 400 hours to more than 800 hours in practicum placements. Of the 29 programs that reported the actual number of hours and number of placements, more than half (16) have a field work component of 500 to 600 hours. Another nine colleges report placing their students in field work settings for 600 to nearly 900 hours while four programs reported having field work of less than 500 hours.

One might expect that students in programs with more hours of field work would be assigned more settings. However, as seen in Chart 1, students who participate in programs with a greater number of hours in practicum settings are not necessarily placed in more settings. Of programs having less than 500 hours of practicum, 75 percent send their students to three field work placements. In programs with 500 to 600 hours of practicum, the percentage of students placed in three settings falls to 50 percent, but few programs place students in more than four settings even when the number of practicum hours far exceeds 600 hours.

CHART 1

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NUMBER OF HOURS SPENT IN PRACTICUM SETTINGS AND NUMBER OF PRACTICUM PLACEMENTS

Number of Hours in Practicum Settings

Number of Practicum Placements	< 500 hours n = 4	500 – 600 hours n = 16	> 600 hours n = 9
3	75%	50%	33%
4	25%	19%	44%
5	0	12%	0
6	0	19%	22%

Similarly, Chart 2 shows that the length of the training program does not necessarily affect the number of practicum placements. For example, for the 16 colleges having 500 to 600 hours of field work, there is little difference in number of placements even though the study period varies from one to three years.

CHART 2

COLLEGES REPORTING 500 TO 600 HOURS OF FIELD PLACEMENT OVER COURSE OF STUDY

N=16	3 Placements	4 Placements	5 Placements	6 Placements
1-2 year Programs	4	4	1	2
3-year Programs	0	4	1	0

Configuration of Field Work Placements

The structure of field work includes the configuration of the placements which reflects the interplay of such factors as the intended purposes of the placement, expectations of students during the placement, the variety of setting types students may or are required to visit, the number of students placed simultaneously in a single setting, and the flexibility with which colleges address scheduling challenges experienced by students, field work sites and college faculty.

Once again, there is much variability in the configuration of field work placements across the 31 programs participating in this study. While the curricula of ECCE certificate and diploma programs contain similar course content that reflects a common broad core of knowledge and skills in child development and ECCE methodology, as well as a supervised field placement component, there is considerable variability across ECCE training programs in the types of field work settings used, the age range of children focussed on and the expectations of students. *Our Child Care Workforce: From Recognition to Remuneration*[9] reported that colleges are increasingly assigning students to settings for various age groups of children during their training. Most of the 31 colleges in this study report that students are placed in as wide a variety of ECCE-related settings as possible in their communities. Several colleges noted that they use only non-profit programs and regulated family child care homes. Very few colleges in this study report using both non-profit and for-profit settings.

However, as reported in *Our Child Care Workforce*, there is an overall trend toward expanding the scope of ECCE postsecondary programs to include children from birth to age 12 in a variety of settings. In this study, only five colleges report that students are expected to concentrate their learning on preschoolers with little or no opportunity to experience working with infants, toddlers or school-age children.

Most colleges assign students to some combination of placement sites that include the four age groups of children—infants, toddlers, preschoolers and school-aged children. Eight of the 31 colleges require that students complete placements with children from all age groups in order to graduate. Some colleges require that students spend time in a group care program early in their training. Others place students in a wide variety of settings at the beginning of the study period and designate group care and preschool programs for block placements later on. Sometimes, students have an opportunity to specialize in a particular type of setting or age group during their final field placement. A few colleges include field work in special needs settings as part of the basic curriculum while others permit students to identify an area of particular interest for their final placement. This might be in a specialized setting such as a hospital, transition house or a program serving children with special needs. Some programs encourage students to participate in selecting the setting for their block placements.

Variations in configuration go beyond age ranges and types of settings. For example, Canadore College in Ontario has recently changed its structure, with interesting results. Students are introduced to most of the theory in the first semesters and the entire fourth semester is focussed on field work. The college has found that by having all the theory first, and all the field placements later, students are less stressed and have time to absorb their learning. Canadore reports that since this structure has been implemented, the attrition rate has decreased by 14 percent.

Other colleges have implemented continuous placements throughout each semester. At Mohawk College in Ontario, for example, students combine a few days of field work throughout each of their courses in addition to their formal placements. During a 42-hour course, students spend four hours visiting a centre to observe how course material applies to practice.

Mohawk College also views long-term field placements as potential employment opportunities. Students fulfil six-week placements during their third and fourth semesters. Qualified students have an option to apply for a special placement at a kindergarten, children's aid site, resource centre or hospital. For this placement, students apply to the site as if applying for a job. The college sees this special placement as an employment "jump-off point" that motivates students to do well.

Innovations in Structure of Field Work Placements

While the structure of ECCE training programs varies widely across the county, the rationale for choosing one form over another is seldom articulated. The length of the study period, the number of hours spent in field work, the number of fieldwork placements and the range of settings used for placements seem not to be directly correlated with any specific set of influences. However, one type of structure, the distance education model, is directly related to specific circumstances of ECCE students who because of geography or personal situations cannot access on-campus training.

A Distance Education Program, College of the North Atlantic, St. John's, Newfoundland

College of the North Atlantic faces the challenges of providing training opportunities, including appropriate field placements for ECCE students living in isolated communities. The college has developed a distance education structure that allows ECCE practitioners to increase their knowledge and skills while maintaining commitments to home, family and employment. Diploma students must complete 700 hours of field work. Students who have completed an ECCE certificate or other training are exempt from 120 hours of this field work.

The majority of College of the North Atlantic ECCE students study part time. Students come to the campus for three, three-week on-site institutes during their studies. Field work is organized so that all students have an opportunity to experience at least one field placement at the on-campus centre and one field placement at an off-campus centre, as well as opportunities for assessment within their own workplace.

At the first institute, students are provided with an orientation to the distance education program and experience a placement at the on-campus child care centre. Students find the opportunity to experience the on-campus child centre a major highlight because of its high-quality innovative setting. Students complete their course work in their home communities and return to the campus for a second and third institute. Each institute revolves around a different area such as music, art and play environments. After completing two institutes, students are placed in an off-campus community-based setting for a block placement. Between institutes and the off-campus block placement, faculty visit students' places of work to observe and assess their ECCE practice in their own work settings.

When students are observed in placements other than their workplace, they are given daily feedback from the sponsor educator and feedback at least once a week by faculty. The student, sponsor educator and faculty meet three times to determine if the student is meeting the learning outcomes. Students also complete a self-evaluation form which gives them an opportunity to let faculty know what they have accomplished when faculty have not been present. Through a consensus-based process, input from these three perspectives is used to determine the student's final field placement mark.

College of the North Atlantic faces the ongoing challenges for faculty to adequately support distance education students. Faculty have to encourage and maintain contact with students. Allowing students to do some field work at their place of employment is essential. When students come to the campus for institutes, they often go without pay for three weeks at a time. Although some students are eligible for loans, this is still a very challenging situation as these students usually have a very low income, and they incur additional expenses while they are away from their home communities.

Topic Two: Expected Learning Outcomes of Field Work

It is important for this discussion that there be a common understanding of what is meant by learning outcomes or goals for field work in ECCE training programs. Judy Pollard,[10] in her article "A Practicum in Early Childhood Care and Education Training," offers the following description:

> During practicum experiences, students work within community early childhood services side-by-side with agency staff (often referred to as sponsor educators) who serve as models for practice and to whom the student is responsible. During the practicum, the ECCE student integrates and consolidates the theoretical and practical learning and demonstrates the ability to undertake the role and responsibilities of the early childhood educator.

The Canadian Child Care Federation[11] noted that the goals of practicum include opportunities for students to:

- observe exemplary models in a variety of ECCE settings;
- implement acquired knowledge, skills and attitudes in supportive environments;
- analyze field experiences through reflection, self-assessment and feedback from ECCE professionals; and
- synthesize the practical and theoretical elements of one's learning.

For field work experiences to be most beneficial, it is important that the learning outcomes be clearly articulated. Successful placements are more likely to occur when both students and sponsor educators within field placement sites know what is expected. All 31 colleges that participated in this study identify learning outcomes or goals for students for each of their field placements.

As one might expect, there are some general similarities and some specific differences from one college to another. However, Morris[12] asserted that "all colleges seem to agree that learning outcomes include the abilities of reflecting on one's own practices, analyzing situations, problem solving in the context of the children and colleagues, and interpersonal communication." For example, two thirds of the colleges in this study, some with lab schools[13] and some without, specify one or more of the following as goals of first field placement: orientation to child care settings and daily routines; observation of a working centre and ECCE professionals; and introduction to basic observation and child interaction skills.

There appears to be agreement across all 31 colleges that students are not expected to take responsibility for planning or implementing programs with children during early field placements. Several colleges do expect that during the initial field placement students will

assist in the child care setting, focus on learning about children's developmental needs and strive to develop positive relationships with program staff as well as children. All colleges do expect that as students' training progresses, students will take on increasing responsibility during field placements. Students move from the orientation phase of placements where they might "try out" activities with children to increasing levels of activity and responsibility for program planning and implementation.

The rate at which students' responsibilities increase seems to depend on the length of the study period as well as the number and duration of field placements. By graduation, all students are expected to have demonstrated their ability to take full responsibility for a child care program, including classroom organization, supervision of children, behaviour management, and program planning and implementation. Students who experience fewer field placements during their study period are expected by their final placement to attain skills comparable to those of students with a greater number of placements.

Some colleges establish field placement expectations that set a very high standard for new graduates in the ECCE field. For example, Seneca College in Ontario explains that students must be able to demonstrate good programming skills, develop an emergent curriculum, set up learning centres, interact well with children and deal with separation anxiety. There is also an emphasis on teamwork, working with other students, sharing teaching roles, taking initiative to develop resources, as well as to plan and evaluate.

Red Deer College in Alberta has expectations of second-year students which the coordinator describes as follows:

> We focus on planning in a more diverse and integrated way, including working with families, special needs children, early intervention, high-need families, and infants and toddlers. Administration skills are also built in. There is also a community service project where students spend 25 hours as volunteers with family- and child-supporting agencies. Students are expected to go out into the field to apply what they are learning in their course work.

Some colleges expect graduating students to have demonstrated competency in working with children from birth to age 12. Canadore College in Ontario is one of these. The coordinator explains:

> The curriculum is innovative as it gives a broad base. Students get to experience a range of sites and people. The diversity of experience and available opportunities are great. It is a strength that the program looks at children older than preschoolers. There is an infant, toddler, preschool and school-age component as well as administration, all within the diploma program, so the program appeals to a much broader scope of students.

Some colleges in this study highlighted an emphasis on ensuring that graduating students have demonstrated their ability to reflect understanding of diversity and inclusion issues in their programming. Red River College in Manitoba places emphasis on student planning that includes children with special needs during the second year. Students are expected to understand inclusion in a broad context. Malaspina College in British Columbia also highlights its program's focus on inclusion and diversity. Its part-time program for First Nations students builds student awareness of Aboriginal culture and ways of learning through course work, and field work putting an emphasis on inclusion in the child care setting.

Innovations in Expected Learning Outcomes of Field Work

The innovations described below speak to the goal of colleges to expand, extend or standardize the desired learning outcomes for students as they seek to gain broader perspectives and appreciate the multifaceted role of the early childhood educator. The goal is to set higher standards in the hope that these will result in enhanced quality care for children, families and communities. The following colleges are exploring some promising ideas related to learning outcomes.

Children Teaching Teachers, Douglas College, New Westminster, British Columbia
Douglas College has developed learning outcomes based on a "Children Teaching Teachers" methodology. The college endeavours to involve students in a model of quality child care that exemplifies its philosophy. The program focusses on the principles of the Reggio Emilia approach where children's learning environments are child-centred, authentic and esthetically pleasing, and activities are based on children's interests rather than on theme-based programming.

When students start the second semester, they are grouped into clusters of six for a six-week on-site placement. Children from local child care centres come to the college two half-days a week to participate in a student-planned and -implemented child care environment. There are also some family days in the on-site child care environment during the semester when parents come with their children. This offers students some experience with families before they go out to a community-based centre.

Students prepare three classrooms in an age-appropriate manner for morning sessions with children from various nearby child care centres. Reggio Emelia principles are used, with an emphasis on the co-construction of knowledge. A faculty instructor is assigned to each group, and observes how the student group works with the children.

Following each session with the children, there is considerable documentation, analysis and debriefing of students' work with the children. Videotaping is often used as an observation tool. Each group writes a collaborative journal about each session's activities and also identifies "hot topics" for seminar discussions.

At the end of the second semester, students are placed at centres in the community for five weeks. This practicum period focusses on using Reggio Emelia principles to organize developmentally appropriate activities based on the interests of the children. Students develop skills in guiding children's learning and behaviour with a focus on developing positive relationships.

Through this approach to field work placements, the students learn very creative and child-centred ECCE approaches. Parents benefit as they observe this child-focussed approach and come to feel a part of their children's education. The college reports that faculty are encouraged by the degree of learning students demonstrate and by their creativity. This approach has led to strong collaboration among college faculty. The college reports that the Children Teaching Teachers approach has "a life of its own" and requires much collaboration and integrating of subjects. The program forces students to "move beyond the student's desire to perform and put on a good show for faculty."

Standardized Provincial Competencies, Cégep de Saint-Hyacynthe, St-Hyacinthe, Quebec and Cégep de Saint-Jérôme, Saint-Jerome, Quebec
The Quebec Ministry of Advanced Education has established provincial guidelines which all ECCE training institutions in the province are legally required to follow. Cégep de Saint-Hyacinthe and Cégep de Saint-Jérôme are representative of how Quebec colleges are working with these standardized guidelines.

The guidelines include learning goals and objectives, time frames and student assessment criteria for field placements. They are sufficiently general to allow all training institutions to integrate them into their respective philosophies and program curricula, while also providing a consistent approach to student evaluation for the field work component of ECCE training throughout the province.

ECCE departments of Quebec colleges interpret the guidelines for use in their respective institutions and determine how they will be implemented for field work placements. The minimum number of practicum hours is predetermined by the Ministry and is not flexible, but each institution can determine its own schedule of practicum sessions within the school year.

Colleges report that the provincial guidelines support the practicum planning process. Their general nature allows each institution enough latitude to adapt them to the specific child care situations of their own communities. College staff appreciate the common set of standards and norms which result from these provincial guidelines. Coordinators commented on the importance of the input that teachers and other experts have had into the review of Quebec's system. The new system bases the evaluation of all teaching and field work on a common set of competencies and emphasizes the importance of integrating all courses with field work and the reality of the workplace.

The Ministry of Advanced Education has developed a field work evaluation grid to be used for determining the extent to which students are meeting the required objectives. The current emphasis on integrated and competency-based practicum experiences is viewed as a positive direction for the field. Colleges are supportive of the use of provincial guidelines for practicum to encourage province-wide norms and expectations of excellence.

Building Relationships with Families, Holland College, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island

The Holland College Advisory Committee, a group including front-line ECCE staff, government personnel, child care policy staff and students, was concerned with ECCE graduates' ability to relate to and build relationships with parents and families. Traditional ECCE field placements did not seem to provide opportunities to build these skills. Placement sites seemed unable under the existing structure to encourage students to build deep relationships with families, primarily because the students were placed in the settings for only short periods. The Advisory Committee felt it was important to explore ways to encourage students to learn how to support families and to develop skills in working with families of children with special needs.

Students now engage in continuous field observation work in combination with courses about special needs and family theory. Students are placed in hospitals, family resource centres, infant centres, kindergartens and special needs classes in schools as well as in the more traditional day care and preschool settings. As well, all students complete a placement at the campus child development centre.

Students are expected to undertake field work hours as a project. One group of students in a family studies course became connected with the Association of Community Living and worked with a group of families with children with Down's syndrome to learn about the experiences of families with children who have special needs. Parents were invited into the college resource area to meet with students while other students provided child care for their children. At one of these sessions, parents described the insensitive ways in which they had been given information about their children. Working with the college and the families' pediatricians, the students developed protocols for medical and social service staff for communicating with parents. Through this experience, students learned about advocacy, community development and empowering families.

College staff have observed that students benefit tremendously from these important opportunities to relate to families. This relatively new approach has been successful in increasing students' confidence in working with parents. In hospital placements, students work closely with families and are exposed to life and death issues. In working with infants, students gain an appreciation of early child development. Special needs placements give students a unique appreciation of these children, and at family centres they gain insight and

sensitivity to the stresses of family life. The connection between students and the community has grown as their community projects lead to positive community development outcomes. Students are better prepared to see the "big picture" in the ECCE field.

The preliminary planning undertaken by the college and the community at large has contributed to the success of extending expected learning outcomes beyond the usual beginning ECCE skills. The resulting cooperation between the college and the community has enhanced learning opportunities for students and improved their effectiveness in working with families after graduation.

Topic Three: Role of Sponsor Educators in Field Work Placements

The sponsor educator plays a vital role in students' achievement of the desired learning outcomes. Generally, colleges expect sponsor educators to be keenly interested in supporting students to develop the full range of skills needed to operate a quality child care program. However, as Singleton[14] has noted:

> While the students are involved in their field placements, experienced child care practitioners share responsibility for their learning by providing informal support and guidance. Many practitioners, however, have few resources upon which to develop this practice-based learning experience. There is significant good will and intention in working with ECCE students but little exists in the way of guiding frameworks for this specialized area of practice.

It is assumed that sponsor educators will devote time to helping students learn to identify and respond to the developmental needs of children, to plan and implement appropriate activities, and to put theoretical learning into practice. They are also expected to provide daily support, encouragement and feedback to the student, to meet regularly with college faculty to discuss the student's progress, and often to complete written reports about the student's progress. All of this must occur while simultaneously ensuring that the child care program continues to run smoothly, that the focus on the well-being of the children in the program remains paramount, that the usual administrative tasks are completed, and that parents are comfortable with the involvement of students with their children.

Nearly every training institution in this study notes that positive relationships among sponsor educators, students and college faculty are essential to ensure optimal learning environments for students during field placements. Almost every college also identifies that one key function of college faculty is determining whether the relationship between the student and the sponsor educator "is going well." Many colleges say too that managing relationships among themselves, sponsor educators and students presents ongoing challenges.

At the same time, only a few colleges make reference to activities that involve sponsor educators with college faculty in planned opportunities for relationship building, information sharing, discussion of various child care topics, or exploration of field placement issues. Vanier College in Montreal hosts an annual meeting with sponsor educators as a way to keep everyone on the same track. Holland College in Prince Edward Island invites all placement staff to social evenings with expert ECCE speakers and with good food. Capilano College in British Columbia requires that sponsor teachers attend meetings offered by the college.

A few other colleges have responded by developing manuals or informal written contracts for sponsor educators that describe the roles and responsibilities of sponsor educators, practicum students and college faculty. Grant MacEwan College in Alberta provides a handbook to each sponsor agency which provides orientation and information about the roles of the student, the sponsor educator and the field work coordinator. It also outlines the student evaluation process. Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology, Wascana Institute in Regina provides every sponsor educator with a booklet that identifies the roles and responsibilities of both the sponsor educator and the student.

Northwest Community College in British Columbia has developed a supervisor's guide to practicum to help orient new sponsor educators to their role by describing all the "nuts and bolts" of how to support a student. Fanshawe College in Ontario has a field coordinator on staff who assigns placements to students based on their requests. After the field coordinator makes a site visit to assess whether a new site is appropriate for field work, an informal contract between college and the sponsor educator covers everyone's roles and responsibilities. It is interesting to note that many of the colleges that have developed written documents for sponsor educators report having no shortage of satisfactory field placement sites.

Innovations in the Role of Sponsor Educators in Field Work Placements

The innovations described below demonstrate the general willingness of colleges to support the role of sponsor educators in the process of preparing students to enter the field. They address the need for ongoing professional development of sponsor educators with respect to their unique role with students. The innovations build on current interest and research related to the value of mentoring relationships for staff in the field placement site as well as for students.

Training Sponsor Educators, Okanagan University College, Kelowna, British Columbia
Okanagan College provides some practical training to sponsors of field placements for all of the college's programs, including nursing, social work and child care. This need was identified by faculty who felt that sponsors needed support to be effective in their unique role with students. The college provides the training as a way to recognize and thank sponsors for

their work with students. The content of the annual training includes information about optimum use of practicum sites, supervision skills and self-care. The training also gives the college an opportunity to share its philosophy, disseminate research and develop relationships with sponsors. Attendance of various professionals at training workshops encourages networking among professional groups.

A faculty committee with representatives from across various disciplines plans the training day. Most recently, the training day began with a large group gathering where the Dean thanked the sponsors for their contribution. A series of guest speakers on topics requested by sponsors and faculty followed. Topics included the ways to support students, giving feedback and dealing with challenging students. A lengthy lunch allows time for networking. During the afternoon, sponsors meet within their own discipline groups (e.g. ECCE, nursing, social work), providing opportunities for in-depth discussions on specific program areas.

ECCE sponsor educators and those faculty directly responsible for ECCE students both report benefits from these training days. The quality of supervision of students has improved and the faculty's relationships with sponsor educators has been strengthened. The college plans to build on this training through the addition of a second specialized training day for ECCE sponsor educators only.

A sponsor training day requires a good deal of organizational work by the various college faculty as often they must act as the resource staff for the day. The full support of the college Dean is required as is a budget for food, speakers, invitations, certificates, etc. As one Okanagan College staff person remarked, "This is a day for sponsors to feel like royalty. It is a thank-you and a support gesture, not a 'you-need-to-learn-something' event. It has to be fun, inspirational and refreshing."

Mentor Training with Sponsor Educators, Mount Royal College, Calgary, Alberta
The mentoring program at Mount Royal College began about six years ago to encourage professionalism in the field, enhance the career laddering possibilities for child care staff, and encourage sponsor educators to take an active role in students' learning. The program encourages the building of strong relationships between sponsor educators and the college and strengthens commitment to the child care field.

Mount Royal College invites staff from community-based child care programs to apply to become mentors. Criteria for mentors include an ECCE diploma, at least one year of experience at the current child care site and a commitment to attend training seminars. Although the matching process for mentors and students is still in the development phase, mentors are currently matched with students using *True Colours*, an interest and personality assessment process. Mentors and students meet at an orientation session at the college where they become acquainted in an informal gathering and have an opportunity to assess their compatibility.

The college offers four mentor workshops each year and mentors are required to attend two of these. These workshops offer skill development as well as support and networking opportunities. A policy manual that clearly states the roles and responsibilities of all parties is provided to mentors. Mentors are paid an honorarium in recognition of their work with students. As mentor activities are scheduled during the regular work day, the college hopes this money will allow child care centres to hire relief staff to enable mentors to attend weekly sessions at the college.

Both students and mentors complete weekly communication forms and submit these to the practicum coordinator at the college. The practicum coordinator also makes regular phone calls to each mentor and visits each student at least once each semester. The mentor completes a mid-term and final evaluation of the student, but it is the practicum coordinator from the college who determines the student's final grade.

The mentor program works well when the respective roles of mentors, students and the college are clearly articulated, and mentors are provided with training specific to their mentoring role. In addition, the mentor program requires the support of all staff in the child care centre, not just from the individual who acts as the mentor.

The mentor program shows some promise of improving students' field placement experiences and establishing stronger collaboration between the college and the field. Students report that they feel better supported in the field placement setting as a result of the use of this mentor model. There also seems to be greater consistency in the skills and experience of sponsor educators since the mentor program began. The ECCE field generally benefits as mentors obtain more status through their professional role.

The college is presently studying the cost-effectiveness of providing honoraria for mentors (as in the existing program) and plans to explore a revised format where two students attend the same field placement two days a week. This is intended to provide peer support and to increase the adult-to-child ratio so that mentors can be released from the centres to attend weekly sessions at the college.

Topic Four: Selection of Sites for Field Work Placements

Training institutions usually prefer that field placements for students be in child care settings that exemplify high standards of practice. Many colleges participating in this report use only licensed settings for field placements. Colleges that use other types of settings sometimes do so because no other facility exists but more often because of a philosophy that values broadening students' experiences beyond typical ECCE settings.

Many colleges have lab schools, usually located on campus, that are often used for early orientation of students to the field and for observation purposes. Colleges identify that they

like having a controlled child care environment to orient new students to the college's own philosophy of early childhood education and care, and to demonstrate the standards of practice they expect from their students. Five of the colleges participating in this study have their own lab schools. These colleges involve their students in the lab environment as much as possible during the training period, but also use community-based sites for field placements. Colleges without lab schools seek placement sites within the community for all student placements. Many colleges report that finding suitable field work sites is an ongoing challenge because either there are more students than the available sites can handle and/or the standards of practice are less than desired.

The ways in which colleges determine the quality of practicum settings vary widely. While some colleges accept any setting that offers to take students, about half of the 31 colleges in this study explicitly state that college staff assess potential sites and sponsor educators to determine suitability. The coordinator at Grant MacEwan Community College in Alberta describes an experience that is familiar to many other colleges:

> The quality of the caregivers in the field does vary. The level of supervision skills is also a concern as there is a lack of training in this area and many don't know how to supervise students properly. Visits are done to potential sites and professional suitability is assessed. Faculty look to see if the centre will model appropriate behaviour and philosophy.

Some colleges report having difficulty finding a sufficient number of practicum settings. Other studies corroborate these reports:

> Some community colleges are finding it increasingly difficult to secure appropriate field placements for students—particularly quality centres which will agree to supervise students. Several institutions have reduced faculty supervision time allocated for field placements which reduces the support for both the ECE student and the field placement site. This places more responsibility on caregivers working in child care settings who agree to supervise an ECE student. Key informants reported that child care programs sometimes decline ECE student placements because there is insufficient faculty support.[15]

Some colleges in this study admit that they often use less than desirable settings because that is what is available. A few colleges take the position that exposing students to less than ideal child care settings actually enhances students' learning. Others, like respondents in earlier studies, "expressed reservations about placing students in poor quality child care settings because of the effects on students of observing and modeling bad practice."[16]

In this study, some colleges state that they are hopeful that interactions between college faculty and the sponsor educator in less desirable settings will positively influence the quality of care

in those programs. A few colleges state that it is their intention to improve the quality of practicum settings through college involvement with sponsor educators. One college explicitly states that it actively discourages faculty and students from making judgements about the quality of practicum settings and sponsor educators.

Other colleges in this study highlighted their use of unusual field placement sites. For example, at Sir Sandford Fleming College in Ontario, there is an option for students to do specialized practica with a hospital, a family enrichment centre or a transition house. A student who does not require much support can also choose an out-of-town placement. At Conestoga College in Ontario, students have an opportunity to specialize during their fourth field placement. At Yarmouth College in Nova Scotia, students may complete their placement in their home community.

Seneca College in Ontario has a self-run placement option. Students can request a self-run program, and faculty decide if the student is able to manage it. These programs are in schools and community centres where students work in groups of two or three to plan preschool programs that focus on promoting healthy child development. The students are responsible for setting up programs for groups of up to 16 children with three students in each group. The community or school setting where students operate the program offers some supervision, but generally site staff are fairly hands-off, and afford students a large measure of independence. The faculty member is the key person providing support in the self-run program. About two thirds of the students at Seneca complete placements in self-run programs. The college favours this model, and the faculty are very pleased with the growth they see in the students.

At Cambrian College in Ontario, faculty organize all placements until the fourth semester. Students then choose where they want to go and prepare a portfolio, including a résumé and objectives for this placement. They contact the supervisor of their chosen site and arrange an interview. This allows students who live far away to set up a placement in their home community which helps to reduce students' expenses and opens up potential employment doors.

St. Clair College (Windsor campus) also in Ontario recently set up an international field work site in Panama. The field work placement is in a private school which has kindergarten to Grade 3. Schools in Panama have few resources, and students learn to be creative and to work in a foreign environment. The travel itself is a growth experience for many students. The coordinator reports that the "field work placement enriches their experience of diversity, and gives them a big picture perspective."

Innovations in Selection of Sites for Field Work

The innovations described below highlight unique responses of colleges to their own particular context. These innovations range from a very structured approach to a more

open-ended flexible model; both have merit in their attempt to address issues related to quality, philosophy, personal preference and current realities in the field. While both models involve some measure of risk, they also hold promise of positive outcomes based on a successful "match" between colleges, practicum sites and students.

Practicum Site Assessment, George Brown College, Toronto, Ontario
Because George Brown College has access to many child care centres in Toronto, it developed an assessment process to determine the suitability of specific centres for student practicum placements. The process the college developed allows careful selection of a diverse set of child care centres, each of which closely matches the college's own philosophy.

The site assessment process begins with a general review of the centre through a written questionnaire. This is followed by a phone call during which a faculty member explains the college's expectations to a member of the centre staff team. If these two activities indicate a possible "match," the faculty member visits the centre for a day and attends a staff meeting to decide whether the centre will be selected as a field placement site.

After a site has been selected, a field manual is given to the sponsor educator to provide orientation to the field placement process. An important aspect of this manual is its description of the roles and expectation of sponsor educators, students and the college. Only licensed group centres are currently selected for field placements. Although the college agrees philosophically with the idea of placing students in family day care, the logistics of monitoring these settings keep this from moving forward.

The relationship which is built between centre staff and college faculty is the key to determining if a placement is working. Throughout field placements, college faculty visit sites once a week. If there are concerns about the "meshing" of college and centre philosophy, this is discussed with centre staff. During placements, students complete written evaluations of their experiences, as do sponsor educators. Site evaluation results are summarized and discussed by the college's Placement Advisory Committee.

Suitable to large urban settings, this site selection process offers great potential for the development of strong and lasting relationships between college and field placement sites. The college indicates that its process affords students access to quality field placement sites which maximize their learning opportunities. Students can experience field work in a range of sites, including hospitals, teen mother programs and child development centres. This relationship building makes a significant contribution to the learning outcomes for students through the diversity of quality placements available to them.

Student-selected Practicum Sites, Yukon College, Whitehorse, Yukon
Yukon College requires its students to select their own field placement sites. This approach was adopted because there had been many complaints from students about their placements

when the college assigned them to specific sites. A few years ago, there were few trained staff in child care programs. Students were often faced with inappropriate personal and professional issues at practicum sites. Hence, the college established a list of field placement sites from which students choose their field placements.

Most field placement sites on the approved list have staff who hold an ECE certificate or diploma. Before being added to the list, those who are not certified have been assessed by college faculty through:

- a mini-inspection for health, safety and policy issues; and
- a very thorough visit to determine that the site meets the needs of the students and the college program with respect to programming, educational level, interpersonal skills, behaviour management and techniques.

Faculty spend considerable time assessing and reassessing potential sites to keep the list relevant. The list includes the program name, location, hours of operation, age groups of children and the contact name and phone number. Students select sites to visit where they ask questions about the program philosophy, especially as related to child development, before determining where they would prefer to be placed. Once the decision is finalized, college faculty become very involved in the orientation of sponsor educators, and keep in close contact throughout the field placement period.

Through their personal involvement in selection of their field placement site, students seem to feel more comfortable during practica. College faculty report that, since implementation of this self-selection process, there has been less conflict between students and sponsor educators and more willingness to resolve challenges as they arise.

For this method of site selection to be successful, it is essential that the college hold responsibility for final decision making regarding sites for the selection list. This leads to the college having a greater degree of confidence in the standards of practice that are demonstrated to students during placements. The college has also found it necessary to continuously update the list as program staff and other circumstances tend to change over time.

The college feels that this selection process supports higher standards of practice in the field and empowers students to identify field work sites that will best support their learning. The college has identified that this type of self-selection is more suitable to smaller ECCE training programs with fewer than 30 students. This allows faculty to visit the sites frequently and keep close track of students and any changes in field work sites.

Topic Five: Student Assessment During Field Work Placements

An essential part of the field work component for every ECCE training program is student assessment. Generally, student assessment can be thought of as a means for determining the

extent to which individual students meet the intended learning outcomes of field placements. Practicum is an opportunity for students to:

- apply knowledge and skills in a practical setting;
- progressively develop competencies through participation in a range of practical experiences; and
- test their commitment to a career, gain insight into professional practice, evaluate progress and identify areas where further personal and professional development is needed.[17]

How colleges assess students' accomplishments during field placements varies widely. Variations occur in the ways learning is assessed and reported, who is involved in the evaluation process and who determines the student mark for the field placement. However, it is typical to find use of some combination of checklists, anecdotal written reports and observation in determining students' achievements and need for improvement. Usually the student, the sponsor educator and the instructor each contribute to the evaluation process.

Much of the variation seems to occur in who holds the primary responsibility for the assessment and the determination of the student's mark. For example, at Canadore College in Ontario, the sponsor educator and program instructor have fairly equal roles in assessing students and in determining grades.

Red River College in Manitoba uses a practical skills evaluation form with identified competencies which the sponsor educator, the instructor and the student complete. However, for every activity and assignment done in field work, the program instructor gives the final marks. At Keewatin College in Manitoba, the student grading responsibility also rests primarily with the instructor but for a different reason as reported by the coordinator:

> This is a small, rural community and often students can be placed in a site where they have a family member on staff or a child they are related to in the centre. This can be delicate in terms of evaluating the student, and is why there is a much larger focus on what the instructor says over the sponsor educator.

Other colleges have increased the sponsor educator's responsibility for student assessment. As described by the coordinator, Red Deer College in Alberta is one of these:

> We've given up some of the control of student evaluation to sponsor educators. The sponsor educators evaluate both student and the college in terms of the support they got. The form that the student and sponsor educators fill in is very detailed, and the sponsor educator gives out the mark to the student for the first year, and in the second year the sponsor educator and faculty staff collaborate on the mark. This evaluation form was developed in consultation with sponsor educators in the field.

Some colleges have developed what seems to be a very quantitative marking system. For example, at Vanier College in Quebec, students are required to complete a portfolio based on all of their evaluations, where they cross-reference and summarize all their work. The final evaluation is 60 percent based on the faculty supervisor's observations, 30 percent on the integrity and quality of self-reflection in the student's portfolio and 10 percent on the sponsor educator's review. At Fanshawe College in Ontario, the provincial competency standards are used and the sponsor educator fills out mid-term and final evaluations on students. Students also self-evaluate. Core competencies are looked at and rated on a four-point scale.

A few colleges have included a prior learning assessment mechanism into their model. One of these is the College of the North Atlantic, a distance education program, where 700 hours of field work are required in the diploma course. However, students can be exempted from 120 hours of this field work based on previous related training. At Yukon College, experienced practitioners can put together a portfolio that describes their prior work experience for assessment by college faculty for advance credit toward the required number of field work hours.

Innovations in Student Assessment During Field Work Placements

As with many of the examples cited in this report, the innovative models of student assessment during field work placements exemplify the willingness of colleges to "think outside the box." They address the capacity of college programs to chart new ground by placing greater responsibility for assessment on the student and the sponsor educator. In this time of ever-increasing constraint on college spending, this shift of control away from college faculty to the learner and the learning environment is worthy of consideration. The innovations described below offer food for thought in seeking alternatives to assessment of students' learning during field placements.

Student Self-Assessment, Cambrian College, Sudbury, Ontario
Cambrian College was interested in encouraging students' lifelong learning and enabling them to obtain the skills required to continue to self-evaluate their learning needs once they had completed their college program. This is considered to be a crucial skill since practitioners often do not have someone to oversee their work in the field.

The college also wanted to explore ways to lessen the load placed on sponsor educators and to address the challenges for faculty in monitoring students' performance in the field. In addition, the college needed to find ways to assess the extent to which students were meeting the college-determined set of competencies that are a minimum standard for graduation. To accomplish these goals, it developed a self-evaluative tool that encourages students to become lifelong learners through self-assessment skills acquired during their training period.

Use of the evaluation tool begins in the first semester field placement at the on-campus lab school. Teachers in the lab school help students understand the required competencies and instruct them in how to complete the evaluation tool. The tool includes three columns. The first describes the competency; the second requires the student to state evidence of his or her own performance; and the third is verification of achievement of the competency. Students are required to cite three examples for each of the 22 competencies.

The competencies are provincially determined. College staff established lists of competencies for each semester of the program. For example, "accepting children's individuality" is included in the second semester and "respecting individuality" is required in the third semester. If students do not meet a required competency in a particular semester, they are required to repeat the segment which addresses that competency.

The self-assessment tool has had significant benefits for faculty and students. The tool enables faculty to become familiar with each student and to monitor student progress without weekly visits. Sponsor educators and students also benefit because of greater clarity regarding criteria for student assessment. The college coordinator reports that the student self-assessment tool has been successful in building student skills and in reinforcing and familiarizing students with the language used in the ECCE field. The college emphasizes that while it took many hours to categorize the competencies and to develop the tool, the result has been worthwhile for students, sponsor educators and college faculty.

Student Assessment in a Distance Education Program, Northern Lights College, Prince George, B.C.

Northern Lights College serves a large rural region in northeastern British Columbia. Because of the large geographical area it covers, the college could not offer only a typical ECCE program if it was to meet the training needs in the area. About 10 years ago, the college reviewed its on-campus courses and decided how to adapt them for distance education. The distance education program tries to duplicate what happens on campus as the college cannot afford to go out to isolated students.

Northern Lights College uses a learner-centred approach that builds on each student's existing skills. The college recognizes that many of its students are mature learners having both life experience and skills in working with children. The college asks students to self-identify their own existing skills and their own learning goals. Students then strive to meet these self-identified goals during field placements.

The college has been creative in responding to distance students' diverse needs. It has developed its approach step-by-step, trying various techniques and keeping an open mind for new ideas. For example, a peer observation approach was developed to address students' need to receive objective feedback during field placements which occur within a student's home location and often at the student's actual place of employment.

Technology is utilized wherever possible to support student assessment processes. There are mechanisms in place for ongoing communication between students and sponsor educators with the college. Sponsor educators can contact the college through a toll-free line. Teleconferencing on-line between sponsor educators and the college also occurs as a tool for student assessment if the sponsor educator has access to the required technology. Recently, the college has had on-line seminars with students using the real-time chat feature.

Students develop video recordings of their work with children, and the instructor and the student then discuss the videos. Students report that using a video camera in the child care setting creates a pressure similar to that experienced when there is an in-person visit from an instructor. Students also have a peer observe their work with children. The peer completes an observation form which is forwarded to the college. Sponsors educators meet formally with students halfway through the practicum period and also forward an assessment form to the college.

The coordinator reports that the college recognizes the challenges involved in developing a distance education program and acknowledges that faculty were uncertain at first about monitoring students' progress without in-person observation. Instructors are now enthusiastic about the distance education program and are anxious to dispel some of the scepticism in the field about the implementation of high-quality distance education programs.

Topic Six: Field Work Placements for Special Student Populations

In a student-centred learning climate, colleges are compelled to find ways to respond to the particular needs of their students. Whether these needs relate to socio-economic, cultural, linguistic or other issues, they must be acknowledged. In the increasingly diverse student populations of ECCE training programs, recruitment of students, access to training, cultural relevance of program content and student support services must all be examined to reduce barriers and increase opportunities. The examples offered in this section illustrate the approaches used by several colleges to enhance the comfort level and support the success of two special student populations, First Nations students and working students.

First Nations Students

Increasingly, there is recognition of the need for culturally relevant child care programs and ECCE training across the country. Colleges located in areas with a First Nations population are especially challenged to adapt their training programs to address the needs of First Nations ECCE students and of First Nations families who use community child care settings. This means colleges must prepare students to base their work with children and families on culturally responsive practices which will benefit individual children and their families as well as themselves as care providers.

To do so, colleges have begun to address the cultural gaps that exist between their existing ECCE programs and practices and First Nations communities. Until quite recently, colleges operated from a single service model which was intended to treat all students equally. For First Nations students to participate successfully, colleges need to identify and eliminate institutional policies or practices that either deliberately or inadvertently exclude many First Nations students. The challenge of serving First Nations populations stretches across a broad expanse of college policies and practices from admission requirements to study options to course content to field work placements.

Innovations in ECCE Training for First Nations Students

For many years, colleges lacked the ability to respond to the specific needs of First Nations students and to acknowledge the contributions that First Nations culture could make to their programs. In their efforts to move toward cultural competence, some colleges have begun to recognize their own limitations and to undertake some strategies to facilitate First Nations inclusion. Others have developed some innovative initiatives to expand the knowledge of effective ways to involve First Nations students in the ECCE field, to include First Nations cultural values, attitudes and traditions in their training programs and to offer appropriate field placement options to First Nations students.

Cultural Relevance, Keewatin College, The Pas, Manitoba

Keewatin College is one of the colleges addressing the ECCE training needs of First Nations students. Keewatin adheres to a philosophy that holds the college responsible for meeting the needs of all of its students. The presence of the First Nations population in the community drew the college's attention to the specific cultural and learning needs of First Nations students. Consequently, the college has developed some innovative approaches to field placements and course content of its ECCE program.

With assistance from a First Nations Advisory Committee, the college determined which areas of the ECCE training curriculum needed Aboriginal content. Resource people from the community come into the college to teach course content related to First Nations culture. There is also a faculty member who is a First Nations elder. Many courses now have First Nations content, such as culturally relevant arts and crafts and Aboriginal language awareness. Students are encouraged to engage children in a wide array of culturally relevant activities, and many class projects include a First Nations approach to human development like the medicine wheel. An interpersonal communications course called "The Sacred Tree" which is led by an external facilitator has been developed.

On-reserve field placements are unique. There is one on-reserve child care centre that is a model centre. This centre collaborated with the college to take practicum students. The coordinator at Keewatin describes the centre as an inspirational place, especially for First Nations students. Practicum placements occur at this on-reserve centre and at unlicensed

Aboriginal Head Start programs in the area, as well as in family child care homes, community-based programs and nursery schools.

The effort of Keewatin College to address the needs of First Nations students in its ECCE program has encouraged other colleges to explore ways to develop ECCE training within a First Nations context. Keewatin College has recognized the importance of having First Nations ECCE faculty members and is hoping this will happen in the near future. The college is also looking at developing some post-basic ECCE diploma programs.

On Reserve Model, Mohawk College, Brantford, Ontario
In the early 1990s, First Nations bands in the Brantford area explored how colleges might incorporate First Nations students into their ECCE training programs. Mohawk College was selected to work with the bands because the college was prepared to be very flexible in meeting the needs of First Nations students. The college has three First Nations counsellors on staff who support the faculty in their work with First Nations students. While these counsellors serve the entire college, they have had a particularly important role in the success of the First Nations component of the ECCE program.

The college immediately recognized the need for an off-campus on-reserve component to the ECCE program. The First Nations component involved students in a program model that used a variety of sites for both course work and field placements. The program was organized so that students met at on-reserve sites such as churches and other community settings for classes two days each week, came to the campus for classes two days each week, and then spent the fifth day each week engaged in independent learning through field work visits and volunteer work at on-reserve placements coordinated through the college.

From the perspective of both the college and the bands, this on-reserve model has several strengths. First Nations students begin to develop trust in the college as they enter into their studies in a familiar environment. Using on-reserve child care programs and other settings for weekly field placements builds relationships between the college and on-reserve programs and also strengthens relationships within the on-reserve ECCE community so that its members feel less threatened by college faculty. College faculty and non-Aboriginal students have increased their own cultural awareness through this focussed work with First Nations students. The local ECCE community has benefited from a general increase in cultural competency throughout the Brantford area. Children and families benefit from the development of programming in ECCE settings that reflects First Nations culture and parenting styles.

The college did not expect the broad scope of outcomes that have resulted from this initiative. Its original intent had been to graduate more First Nations students. The success of this innovative approach to ECCE training and field work has led the college to look at offering

some distance education programs specific to First Nations students and to seek other ways to address the specific needs of First Nations students.

Working Students

Accounts of increasing numbers of working students in ECCE programs come from across the country. Greater expectations for training have encouraged experienced ECCE practitioners to expand and formalize their theoretical knowledge and skill base. The result is a more diverse college population with more students taking training while they continue to work in the field.

One of the challenges for colleges is appropriate field work placements for working students. These students cannot easily participate in traditional field placements as they usually need or want to continue to work while they complete their studies. Colleges that serve urban students are as challenged as those serving students in rural settings. It is difficult for individual centres to release staff to complete practicum requirements. Qualified substitute staff may be difficult to find. There can be negative results for children who experience the loss of familiar caregivers and for parents who may feel less confident in substitute staff who are brought in to replace regular caregivers who are away on practicum. There can be negative impacts for other program staff who may be left with additional responsibilities when regular staff are elsewhere and for working students themselves who must use vacation time or take unpaid leave to complete field work requirements. The coordinator at Northwest Community College in Terrace, British Columbia explains its approach to meeting this challenge:

> Distance education field work for our working students is a challenge. Students want to do their practicum placements where they live. The instructor assesses the quality of the workplace as a practicum site and decides if it meets acceptable standards. The challenge is to provide students with an objective practicum experience. Workplace-based practicum assessment tools have been developed for students who cannot leave their workplace. Working students are exempted from one practicum placement, but they must observe at least three days in another centre.

College of the North Atlantic in Newfoundland identifies another challenge related to distance education and working students.

> When students come to the campus for institutes, they often have to go for three weeks without pay. These students have very low incomes and are coming away from their home communities. It is often hard for them to separate from their families. Some of these students are eligible for loans, but it is definitely a hardship for almost everyone and a barrier for some.

Innovations in Field Work Placements for Working Students

Urban colleges have challenges in finding suitable field placements for working students as well. Practicum traditionally occurs during the regular Monday to Friday work week. Options for alternative field placement times are generally not available. Few colleges allow working students to complete practicum requirements in their own work setting because of the potential for role confusion and negative impacts on interpersonal relationships among staff. Several colleges are beginning to explore potential alternative field work options.

Flexible Options, Grant MacEwan Community College, Edmonton, Alberta
Grant MacEwan Community College has an ECCE program that has developed an innovative approach to field placements for urban working students. The recently implemented provincial requirements of "levels of qualifications" have significantly increased the number of working students in the program. These students require flexibility in the way in which they complete their practicum placement.

The college offers placements year round, and looks at all kinds of flexible options to meet students' needs. Part-time evening and weekend placements have been coordinated for full-time workers. The college also allows students to complete half-day placements to enable them to integrate the placement with their employment. There are also part-time placements of two days a week that can be combined with students' employment as well as evening or weekend placements.

The college has looked beyond the day care field for placement sites and the types of available field work placements is now very broad. The use of diverse field sites fits well with Grant MacEwan's philosophy that ECCE-trained professionals are qualified to work with children and families in many contexts. Field work placement sites now include Head Start programs, special needs child development centres, hospital centres, social service agencies, respite homes, shelters for abused women and children, community programs in community centres, high school day care programs for young parents, and kindergarten and primary grade classes. There are also some student-run in out-of-school care programs, parent day-out programs and programs for parents participating in English classes. Family day care homes are also used.

There are still many working students needing part-time and flexible options. Grant MacEwan Community College is currently considering an option for staff exchange between centres. Such varied options require much work for college faculty, including weekend and evening work. The college continues to explore various ways to approach field work placements for working students.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study of the field work component of ECCE training programs was to develop descriptions of both typical and innovative approaches to field work used by ECCE training programs in Canadian colleges. It is recognized by ECCE researchers, college faculty and the ECCE field in general that field work is a critical component in the training of students. Currently, college programs devote a range of 400 to more than 800 hours to practicum—a significant proportion of the total number of available training hours.

This study found a range of models and practices in ECCE training programs in all six of the topic areas that were addressed: structure of field work, expected learning outcomes of field work, role of sponsor educators in field work, selection of sites for field work, student assessment during field work, and field work for special student populations. The range of models and practices adopted by the participating colleges seems to be based on a host of factors that include, but are not limited to, the historical development of the program, geographic location, characteristics of the student population and the philosophy of the college.

At the same time, there is a decided lack of research evidence to suggest which factors (in the field work model) are associated with the best outcomes—competent caregivers who provide high-quality care and education to young children.[18] Further study to determine the extent to which the achievement of student learning outcomes correlates with number, duration or type of field work placements, as well as the roles and responsibilities of sponsor educators, student assessment practices and ways to meet the needs of special student populations, is warranted if the field is to reach some conclusions about the cumulative effects of these factors on student learning and the subsequent care of young children.

In addition, colleges are challenged to consider the impact of the variability of their field work models and practices on the sponsor educators on whom they rely so that students can have opportunities to observe and put into practice the theoretical concepts they learn in course work. Students must become involved in child care and education settings that demonstrate exemplary practice. To attract and retain the very best experienced practitioners in the field to act as models and mentors to students, colleges must find tangible and meaningful ways to support and validate the contributions of sponsor educators.

Educational institutions have begun to explore alternative models of program delivery which are responsive to the needs of special student populations such as working students and First Nations students. The students those colleges serve have become increasingly diverse, with more students having prior work and life experience, coming from geographic locations outside large cities, and carrying work and family responsibilities in addition to their studies. Many colleges would add cultural factors and settlement issues to the list of student diversity

issues that they now face. Flexible study schedules, a variety of field placement options, culturally relevant course content and culturally competent faculty, and sponsor educators are necessary responses that require further exploration to meet the needs of the full spectrum of students.

This study also identified a growing trend toward the development of collaborative efforts to enhance the quality of care offered to young children. Increasingly, there is evidence of the development of cooperative and mutually supportive relationships among various levels of government, professional child care organizations, college faculty, students and sponsor educators. Colleges are recognizing the growing need to establish and nurture partnerships with sponsor educators, to develop respectful and effective field site selection processes, and to address the needs of special student populations. Innovations such as training for sponsor educators, involvement of students in selecting their own field placement sites and development of responsive distance education programs are all ways to lead toward equitable and effective learning opportunities for ECCE students.

At the same time, ECCE coordinators interviewed in this study said they had little or no information about field work practices in training programs other than their own. This lack of information regarding this critical aspect of training has significant implications for the ECCE field, particularly in relationship to portability, transferability and articulation of ECCE credits and credentials from one institution to another across the country.[19] Each of the coordinators interviewed expressed strong interest in learning about the field work practices of other colleges. As yet, there are very few mechanisms for sharing such information.

Continued research into the field work component of ECCE training programs is needed to deepen our knowledge of field work practices and our understanding of how these affect the quality of care that is provided to young children. This study researched field work models only from the perspective of the coordinators of ECCE training programs. Studies which focus on the experiences of sponsor educators and students during practica would further understanding of the contribution that field work makes to the preparation of effective early childhood educators.

Colleges play an essential role in the development of qualified child care providers and the enhancement of the child care field in general. Further exploration into the models and practices of field work that are currently in use will better enable colleges to prepare students for the range of opportunities and challenges in the ECCE field today and in the future.

Endnotes

1. Yarrow, 1992.
2. Price, 1987; Briggs, 1984, cited in Ryan, Toohey & Hughes, 1996.
3. Morris, 1999.
4. Early Childhood Educators of British Columbia, 1997.
5. Beach & Bertrand, 1998a.
6. Beach, Bertrand & Cleveland, 1998.
7. Sponsor educators are also known as cooperating teachers, on-site supervisors or practicum site supervisors.
8. Beach, Bertrand & Cleveland, 1998.
9. Ibid.
10. Pollard, cited in Morris, 1999.
11. Canadian Child Care Federation, 1995.
12. Morris, 1999.
13. Lab schools used here are owned and managed by the ECCE department of the college.
14. Singleton, cited in Morris, 1999.
15. Beach, Bertrand and Cleveland, 1998.
16. Ibid.
17. Dareth, 1990, cited in Ryan, Toohey & Hughes, 1996.
18. Beach & Bertrand, 1998b.
19. Bertrand & Beach, 1999.

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Appendix 1

ECCE Programs Interviewed

Cambrian College, Sudbury, Ont.
Canadore College, North Bay, Ont.
Capilano College, North Vancouver, B.C.
CEGEP de Saint-Hyacynthe, St-Hyacynthe, Que.
CEGEP de Saint-Jérôme, Saint-Jérôme, Que.
CEGEP de Vieux Montrreal, Montreal, Que.
Collége Notre-Dame-De-Foy, Saint-Augustin de Desmaures, Que.
Collége de Sainte-Foy, Sainte-Foy, Que.
College of the North Atlantic, St. John's, Nfld.
Conestoga College, Waterloo, Ont.
Douglas College, New Westminster, B.C.
Fanshawe College, London, Ont.
George Brown College, Toronto, Ont.
Grant MacEwan Community College, Edmonton, Alta.
Holland College, Charlottetown, P.E.I.
Keewatin Community College, The Pas, Man.
Malaspina College, Courtenay, B.C.
Mohawk College, Brantford, Ont.
Mount Royal College, Calgary, Alta.
Northern Lights Community College, Prince George, B.C.
Northwest Community College, Terrace, B.C.
Okanagan University College, Kelowna, B.C.
Red Deer College, Red Deer, Alta.
Red River College, Winnipeg, Man.
Seneca College, North York, Ont.
St. Clair Windsor College, Windsor, Ont.
Sir Sandford Fleming College, Peterborough, Ont.
Vanier College, Montreal, Que.
SIAST, Wascana Institute, Regina, Sask.
Yarmouth College, Burridge, N.S.
Yukon College, Whitehorse, Yukon

Community Colleges and the Delivery of Professional Development

to the Early Childhood Care and Education Sector

by Jane Beach

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Abstract

What professional development activities are offered to ECCE professionals? This study brings together the results of several past studies and those from interviews and focus groups on the subject.

Education and training have been shown to support positive interactions between caregivers and children, and is the single most important item in delivering quality. This overview provides a starting point to examine the types of professional development available and the trends and issues in its development and delivery. Six college profiles on approaches to professional development are presented. The study concludes that more colleges, professional associations and community-based organizations need to begin to consider a framework for training and development within the context of an integrated system of ECCE that meets a multiplicity of needs.

Introduction

The Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) and the Canadian Child Care Federation (CCCF) are conducting a Program of Research on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). The Program of Research is focussed on improving the capacity and quality of Canadian college and university ECCE training programs and professional development activities.

The purpose of this project, within the Program of Research, is to summarize the extent and nature of professional development activities offered by Canadian colleges to ECCE practitioners. It provides a context for discussing professional development and the issues that have an impact on its delivery. It explores the identified professional development needs of practitioners and the degree to which colleges are meeting them. In addition, it discusses issues in and barriers to providing professional development to the ECCE sector.

The report is organized into four sections:

- an introduction to and overview of the project, including the approach and limitations;
- the context for training and professional development, including the nature of the work and the workforce, and factors affecting the nature and delivery of training;
- the delivery of professional development, including what is currently available, the identified needs and gaps, and the issues in meeting those needs; and
- summary and conclusions.

Background

There are approximately 100 colleges and CEGEPs in Canada which offer ECCE certificate, diploma and post-diploma certificate programs. These programs include those that meet the basic postsecondary requirements established by provincial and territorial governments, as well as specialized training for working in specific ECCE settings or positions. In addition, some colleges offer non-credit courses, workshops and seminars to meet the ongoing training and professional development needs of ECCE credentialed practitioners, and other practitioners working in the sector. Approximately 20,000 individuals are enrolled in ECCE certificate and diploma programs; about 8,000 of these are in full-time programs and 12,000 in continuing education and distance education programs.[1]

Most professional development and in-service training is delivered by ECCE organizations and professional associations. Family child care agencies, family resource programs and child care resource and referral agencies provide the majority of training and professional development to family child care providers. Little is known about the ECCE professional development activities offered by colleges and the degree to which they meet the needs of the sector.

Approach

This paper relies largely on data from previous studies and existing literature. A number of Canadian studies have been undertaken in the past three years, including the Child Care Sector Study and its background and supplementary papers,[2] surveys of regulated and unregulated home child care providers[3] and the National Family Day Care Training Project.[4] Each has collected some information on professional development in ECCE and provides a

base of information upon which this project is built. In addition, the following activities were undertaken:

- a review of the background and research papers prepared for this Program of Research;
- a review of the literature on professional development and related research;
- a scan of websites of ECCE professional associations and their links to resources on ECCE professional development;
- a scan of the websites of ACCC-member community colleges and their program offerings;
- a review of information provided by postsecondary training institutions on non-credit professional development from the survey conducted for the Child Care Sector Study;
- key informant interviews with faculty from selected community colleges and ECCE organizations that provide training;
- focus groups with ECCE college faculty, community-based trainers and consumers of professional development from the child care field in Toronto, Vancouver and St-Hyacinthe, Quebec; and
- a focus group with college faculty on the Steering Committee for the Program of Research at the outset of this project.

Limitations

This paper is limited in scope. Very little literature has been published on many of the issues involved with professional development. There is literature on necessary competencies for various types of jobs in the field of ECCE and ways to measure them. [5] Considerable consultation has gone into the development of codes of ethics, standards of practice, certification procedures and training guidelines. Yet, little is known about the impact of various forms of professional development and whether or not they are meeting the stated need. As a result, much of the discussion in this paper is based on information gathered through key informant interviews and a limited number of focus groups.

The information provided on professional development is not intended to be an inventory of college professional development activities. It is intended, however, to give an overview of the types of professional development available and trends and issues in its development and delivery. There may well be colleges or organizations providing interesting content or innovative delivery models that are not included. It was beyond the scope of this project to undertake a comprehensive survey that would provide such information.

Focus group locations were chosen for ease of access and gathering adequate numbers of participants together. While there were definite trends in the identified professional development needs of the sector, there was a wide range of opinion on many of the issues and on the role colleges should play. How representative those opinions are of the rest of the college and ECCE community is not known; further study is needed before conclusions can be drawn.

The Context for Training and Professional Development

There is a considerable body of research that identifies the key elements affecting the quality of ECCE arrangements for children. Education and training, particularly in child development, have been shown to support positive interactions between caregivers and children, the single most important element in determining quality.[6] Education and training have also been recognized as enhancing the career mobility of caregivers.[7] However, the majority of caregivers in the broader ECCE workforce do not have formal postsecondary credentials in ECCE. Many participate in professional development activities,[8] yet little information is available on the impact of the types of professional development on quality of care, or on the most effective ways to provide it. This section examines the nature of the work of ECCE and its workforce, and discusses what constitutes professional development and the factors affecting its development and delivery.

The Work of Early Childhood Care and Education

It is hard to assess training and professional development without first considering the purpose of ECCE. The nature of the work and its anticipated outcomes are important to look at to determine what skills are necessary to do the job well and, therefore, what training and professional development might best develop those skills.

Is the primary purpose of ECCE to educate and nurture children, to be a community resource to families, or to be a support to working parents? The mix of programs and services that exist today has several origins, which helps explain how these different views of ECCE evolved.[9] Three of particular significance are:

- the charitable nurseries for the children of sole-support mothers who, through circumstance, had been forced into the paid labour force. These programs arose in the late 1800s and early 1900s;
- part-day nursery schools, primarily for the social, cognitive and physical development of children. The first was developed in the 1920s, along with the first early childhood teacher-training program. Nursery schools went through a rapid period of expansion in the 1950s, largely serving children from middle-income families, with a mother who was not in the paid labour force.
- day care programs for working mothers that began during the Second World War, the numbers of which increased after the beginning of the women's movement and the rise in the labour force participation rate of women with young children.

Legislative requirements for training were implemented a considerable period of time after the establishment of services. Today, requirements for postsecondary training in what we

broadly consider ECCE exist only for a specific proportion of staff for regulated centre-based care. In a few jurisdictions, there are still no requirements.[10]

In recent years, the addition of regulated family child care, early intervention programs for children at risk or with special needs, and family resource programs has added to the mix of services. This has resulted in an often disjointed array of programs and policies, with different funding arrangements, training requirements and program eligibility. Kindergarten programs for five-year-olds remain the only available program for all children, regardless of family circumstance or employment situation, and have clearly defined postsecondary education requirements for staff.

There is no overall policy framework for services for young children, and debates about who should pay for services, how they should be delivered and who should have access to them have been on and off the public agenda for the last 30 years. Apart from attending kindergarten, most children in some form of non-relative arrangement are cared for by a largely invisible workforce, either in the caregiver or child's home. Many of these caregivers have little formal professional education or training, limited opportunity for professional development and work in isolation, with no peer or other support.

Over the past few years, child care advocates and professional groups have been seeking to increase public support and recognition for the value of the work of caregiving, and to gain government support for the public funding necessary to deliver a competent integrated system of appropriate services. They have also identified the need to develop a framework for the sector that enhances professionalism, while encouraging inclusion of and the development of opportunities for those without formal credentials, especially those in the unregulated sector.

In the European Union, where publicly funded ECCE programs are widely available and are attended by most preschool-age children, there is still considerable discussion about the nature of the work, the purpose of the program, and the types of training and professional development needed.[11] The issue of the professional status of caregivers is still of concern to the field.

Some countries (e.g. France, Italy, Greece and UK) have distinguished between the care of children under three and the education of children over three, with different training requirements to work with each. Other countries (Denmark, Sweden and Spain) organize services under one umbrella, whether it be with education or social welfare authorities.

In France, for example, the five-year postsecondary training program required to become a teacher in an *école maternelle* also qualifies graduates to be primary school teachers, with a

training focus on educational curriculum. Teachers in *écoles maternelles* and in primary schools attend joint professional development, most of which is provided by research institutes and postsecondary institutions. Teachers are paid 85 percent of their salary during attendance at these in-service training programs, some of which are taught over a period of several weeks.

By contrast, Denmark has a more integrated approach to ECCE for children of all ages. Since 1992, the three-year postsecondary training program to become a "pedagogue" qualifies staff to work with children and adults in a variety of education and social care settings. The program includes course content in education, social management theory, communication studies and leadership. On-site professional development may be provided by local authorities, with a focus on decision-making and conflict resolution skills. The Royal Danish School of Educational Studies offers professional development on theoretical approaches, and staff may apply for a secondment of one day a week for two years. Short (30-hour) professional development courses in leadership for centre directors are also widely available. Family child care providers are offered, on an ongoing basis, short courses and workshops, primarily on child development and programming ideas. In addition, they are teamed with six to eight other caregivers, for network opportunities and joint activity planning.[12]

In Canada, the concept of child care is broadening to one of an integrated system of ECCE to meet a multiplicity of needs. Colleges, professional associations and community-based organizations need to start considering a framework for training and professional development within that context.

Focus group participants from the field indicated that their work was becoming more complex and varied. In addition to their work with children, caregivers face increasing demands to:

- help families in crisis and to address situations of family violence;
- work in interdisciplinary teams with other social service, health and educational professionals;
- support families by providing information on available community resources; and
- provide more flexible care arrangements, while maximizing child development opportunities.

The increasing complexity of the job obviously affects the type of professional development needed.

Defining the Workforce

As well as examining the nature of the work, it is important to consider the nature of the workforce. There has been considerable debate about who constitutes the ECCE workforce.

Much of the literature on training and professional development deals with the needs of centre-based staff. After all, that is the only group for whom postsecondary education may be a requirement. The fact remains that this group of trained individuals represents a minority of the broader workforce.

The decision to include unregulated caregivers in the Child Care Sector Study, and to also conduct a separate survey of this group, was a significant departure from other studies of the workforce. Many questions and challenges remain about how to define this often invisible group within a professional framework.

Public policy is a major factor in determining how prevalent this form of care remains. In Quebec, where regulated child care is in the process of becoming largely publicly financed, it is expected that the demand for unregulated care will gradually disappear. However, the future regulated family child care providers are most likely to be the same women who are unregulated today, probably with similar training and professional development needs that they currently have.

In the rest of the country, it is unlikely that such sweeping changes will happen soon. It may well contribute to the quality of care to find meaningful ways to provide support, training, professional development and networking opportunities for this group of caregivers, while advocating for the systemic policy change needed to create an adequate child care system. The research does show that the quality of family child care is higher when caregivers provide care with intention and when they have more training.[13]

Data collected in 1991 for the *Caring for a Living* study indicated that across the country, 58 percent of centre-based child care staff had an ECCE credential. Thirty-six percent had taken additional ECCE-related courses, and approximately 86 percent had attended some professional development activity in the previous 12 months. Even though there were more centre-based staff with ECCE credentials than are required by legislation, over 40 percent did not have formal qualifications.[14] A recent study of unregulated caregivers in Canada indicated that approximately 90 percent did not have ECCE credentials, and 39 percent had participated in some form of professional development, excluding first aid.[15] The nature and content of inservice training and professional development activities are therefore critical to improving the knowledge and skills of caregivers.

Custom tabulations conducted for the Child Care Sector Study and other survey material[16] provide a demographic profile of various types of caregivers. Table 1 shows the highest general education levels achieved by caregivers.

TABLE 1

HIGHEST EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF CAREGIVERS

Type of caregiver	Number	Less than high school	High school	Some postsecondary	Certificate/ diploma	University
Family caregivers	170,000	34.9%	20.9%	13.7%	25.1%	5.4%
In-home caregivers	115,000	47.3%	17.8%	12.4%	17.9%	4.6%
Child care centre and nursery school staff	42,000	18.8%	12.7%	15%	42.5%	11.5%
Family resource program, early intervention staff	4,000*	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Kindergarten teachers	21,000	0.7%	1.1%	3.1%	20.3%	74.8%

* rough estimates taken from the Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs *Status Report on Family Resource Programs across Canada 1995*, and *SpeciaLink*, Vol. 8, no. 1, spring 1995, Provincial and Territorial Early Intervention Directory Supplement

As can be seen above, with the exception of kindergarten teachers, caregivers across settings have a range of education, from less than high school to university completion.

How caregivers come to participate in education and training affects the type and delivery methods that are best suited to meet their needs and encourage their participation in professional development activities. There are three main ways caregivers come to ECCE-related training.[17]

- **High school completion, attainment of an ECCE credential after a course of study at a postsecondary institution, followed by employment in the field.** This route assumes that a caregiver made a conscious decision to enter the field, and has a core body of knowledge at the outset of her career that can be assessed against specific outcome measures.
- **Work in the field prior to any related training.** Many caregivers in this category may initially come to the field without an initial intent on pursuing a career in ECCE. In this category may be centre-based caregivers who start work in a program as an assistant or family caregivers providing care on a casual basis when they are at home with their own young children. Many in-home caregivers work as nannies as a way of gaining entry to the country, but for whom caregiving may not necessarily be a career choice. Some of these caregivers will, at some point, consider caregiving as a longer-term career and will seek out ways to engage in training and professional development, while remaining employed.
- **Postsecondary credentials and employment in another field.** Individuals may choose or be required by changes in the job market to seek a career change. They may work in a child care setting and then seek ECCE-specific credentials.

Each of these avenues into ECCE results in the need for different approaches to training and professional development. The occupation of ECCE is still very much an emerging profession. There is no consistent definition of what constitutes a trained caregiver, nor are there standard requirements for everyone entering the field. However, several efforts are under way to develop tools and processes to professionalize the sector. These include occupational standards, standards of practice, codes of ethics, certification of individuals, accreditation of training institutions and self-regulatory bodies. The development of mechanisms that measure and recognize the skills and knowledge gained from experience and non-credentialed training will be an important component of any professional framework for the sector.

Much of the training and professional development activity focusses on the demand side—what it is that caregivers need to know to be effective in their work. It is also important in the delivery of training and professional development to consider the supply side—who the caregivers are. Effective models of delivery take into account changing demographics, increases in the ethnocultural population, labour force participation rates of mothers with young children, the increase in multiple job holders and economic uncertainty in designing professional development activities.

Defining Professional Development

What exactly is professional development in the context of an emerging profession for which there are no preservice requirements for most of its workforce? Who is it for? What does it include? What is its purpose and is it effective? These are all questions for which there are no clear answers.

One area where there is some agreement is on the purpose of professional development. Comments from the focus group participants and key informants were consistent with the literature in identifying the following purposes:[18]

- to build on existing and improve individual knowledge and skills in specific ECCE-related areas;
- to keep current with emerging research, new policies and the changing social environment;
- to reduce job isolation;
- to enhance a sense of professionalism and self-esteem;
- to improve career mobility; and
- to advance the profession.

There is much less consensus on what constitutes professional development. Focus group participants expressed a range of opinion on what professional development includes:

- only activities offered at a postsecondary institution that lead to a post-diploma or post-certificate credential;

- a course of study designed to enhance ECCE-specific knowledge and skills, taken by an individual who has already acquired the postsecondary credential required to meet the legislated definition of "trained" in her province, whether credit bearing or not;
- any activity designed to enhance ECCE-specific knowledge and skills, taken by any individual working in the field, with the intention of improving ECCE-specific skills and knowledge. This includes certificate and diploma programs taken through continuing education that are equivalent to those taken as preservice training, as well as conferences, workshops and other credit and non-credit courses of study; and
- any activity undertaken by any individual working in the field for either personal or professional growth, including knowledge gained from self-study, reading journal articles, taking general-interest courses, informal networking and peer support activities, as well as more formal courses of study.

The National Family Day Care Training Project suggests that:

> "Training includes any opportunity provided to caregivers to learn new skills or enhance existing skills, or to learn information that builds caregivers' competence, personal empowerment or network of support. We see training as an ongoing process of professional development or lifetime learning. By this definition, training and learning opportunities include a range of activities such as home visits, written or audio-visual resource materials, mentoring, workshops and certificate courses."[19]

Chandler suggests that there are four areas of focus for professional development: orientation for new practitioners; on-the-job training for those with little or no ECCE training; career development available to all practitioners; and fine tuning for skilled and experienced practitioners.[20]

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) promotes an articulated system of professional development that includes all caregivers. *The Early Childhood Career Lattice* puts forward a conceptual framework that:

- recognizes the various experiences and qualifications of the field;
- encourages all caregivers to improve their professional knowledge and skills, and identifies a professional path as one that requires:
  - either a preservice ECCE credential; or
  - ongoing involvement in credit or non-credit training designed to develop competencies that can be assessed, or for which credit may be granted toward a recognized credential.[21]

The literature does suggest that, regardless of particular qualification or setting in which she works, there is a core set of elements that every caregiver should know. *Our Child Care*

Workforce synthesized several Canadian documents which identify key competencies necessary for the sector,[22] and created the following profile of a competent caregiver, as one who will:

- ensure that the physical environment and daily practices of caregiving promote the health, safety and well-being of children in her care;
- establish a working partnership with parents which supports their responsibilities to their children;
- develop and maintain a responsive relationship with each child and with the children as a group;
- plan and provide daily learning opportunities, routines and activities which promote positive child development;
- observe and respond to children's activity and behaviour;
- act in a manner consistent with principles of fairness, equity and diversity to support the development and learning of individual children within the context of family, culture and society; and
- work in partnership with other community members to support the well-being of families.

In many respects, trying to define professional development as separate from training and education creates a false dichotomy. Well over half the students enrolled in ECCE certificate and diploma programs at community colleges are studying through either continuing education or distance education. This suggests that many of these individuals are already working in the field. It therefore would probably be more appropriate to look at all training, education and professional development within a single framework of career development.

In this paper, current ECCE professional development is defined as:

> *any course of study or activity that has been established or developed for the purpose of enhancing an individual's skill and knowledge specific to the field of early childhood care and education, and is undertaken by individuals already working in the sector.*

It includes, but is not necessarily restricted to ECCE:

- certificate and diploma programs offered through continuing education and distance education that usually have academic or other prerequisites for enrolment;
- post-diploma certificate and ECCE degree programs;
- certificate programs, for which there are no academic or similar prerequisites, including family child care and school-age child care certificates;
- courses offered by a community college that may not result in a postsecondary credential, but for which individual credit may be granted;

- activities offered by community colleges which result in neither a credit nor a credential, but may award a certificate of completion;
- related activities offered by either a community college or a community-based organization, such as short courses, conferences, forums, workshops and speaker series;
- related training and other activities provided by a community agency or organization for particular groups of caregivers;
- participation in mentoring activities; and
- participation in peer support networks and information-sharing activities.

In other words, any ECCE-specific activity other than preservice training fits into this definition.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the role of community colleges in the provision of professional development activities. Since most community colleges provide ECCE certificate and diploma programs through continuing education as well as through full-time study, a more limited approach has been taken. This paper does not provide information on college programs that result in credentials defined within a particular province's legislated requirements for trained staff. Details of those programs are contained in *Mobility of ECCE Credits and Credentials in Canada* prepared for this Program of Research.[23] The focus instead is to identify other credit and non-credit programs offered by colleges and to examine them within a context of identified professional development needs for the field and issues in their delivery.

Legislation and Social Policy

The manner in which child care is funded and regulated has a significant impact on the type and delivery of professional development opportunities. Community colleges in each province and territory have training programs that meet the requirements for child care licensing. Most jurisdictions have at least one training program that exceeds the particular requirements. Most also have at least one child care association that provides professional development to the field. The ways in which government policy affects the delivery of professional development are described below:

- Much of the public spending aimed at supporting parental employment takes the form of tax measures and individual transfers. Some provincial government programs aimed at helping social assistance recipients into the labour force require parents to use the least expensive form of child care available. In this market approach, wages for caregivers are generally low, which acts as a disincentive to acquire more training.
- Most public spending aimed at supporting healthy child development and parenting takes the form of direct funding to programs. These programs are often not required to be licensed as child care and hence have no training requirements, but because they are

funded and can offer higher than average wages, they are able to attract more qualified staff.

- New child care policies being implemented in some provinces are driving the need for additional training. For example:
  - Quebec has several policies that affect training and professional development. Effective September 1999, two thirds of centre-based staff will have to be trained—up from one third—and in a new common pedagogical curriculum. Forty-five–hour training programs will also be required for family child care providers. In addition, to meet the demand created by the new $5 per day child care program, Quebec plans to increase the number of regulated spaces by 85,000 over a five-year period. This will put considerable pressure on the college system to adequately train such large numbers of caregivers. Quebec also provides core funding to several child care organizations which provide professional development to the field, and every child care program with a budget over $250,000 must set aside 1 percent for training.
  - Through a federal-provincial Strategic Initiatives Agreement, the provincial government in British Columbia provided funds to both colleges and community agencies to offer professional development for the field, to equip them to meet the requirements of the new supported child care policy.
  - Newfoundland has recently introduced training requirements and a certification process for centre-based staff as well as implemented regulated family child care for the first time.
- In provinces that deliver agency-based family child care, most of the professional development is undertaken by these agencies. British Columbia funds 34 Child Care Resource and Referral Programs whose mandate, in part, is to provide training and support to the family child care sector. In Ontario, Family Resource Programs offer professional development opportunities to the unregulated family child care sector.
- There is less college-based training and professional development for parts of the sector for which there are no legislated requirements. Family child care and school-age child courses are beginning to be offered in a few colleges, but most afford little or no credit transfer to a formal ECCE credential.
- The implementation of Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) in some provinces has allowed for formal recognition of measurable skills and knowledge acquired through other training and experience. Some colleges, for example, allow up to 75 percent of credits to be granted through this process. Other colleges have not yet begun to use this mechanism. PLAR may have the potential to make a positive contribution to a professional development framework for the sector.
- A considerable amount of training and professional development was undertaken during the seven-year funding period of the Child Care Initiative Fund (CCIF). Most of the training was developed by community organizations, but the fund also provided some opportunities for colleges to undertake innovative initiatives, such as the development of the distance education program at the College of the North Atlantic. With the end of CCIF

and the withdrawal of the federal government from the funding of training programs, ECCE faculty may have more limited opportunities to develop or test new approaches as the colleges increase their cost-recovery approaches to training.

- In several provinces, there have been freezes, reductions to or elimination of operating grants. Several key informants indicated that this has resulted in a decrease in the hiring of trained staff. Formerly, many child care programs exceeded the minimum requirements for trained staff; now they are replacing some of them with untrained staff to reduce their expenditures. As well, many indicated that there has been a decrease in or elimination of professional development allocations in child care centre budgets. Untrained staff who are earning low wages are unlikely to be in a position to pay for their own professional development.
- Prince Edward Island, Saskatchewan and British Columbia require ongoing professional development for some members of the ECCE workforce, in order for them or their employers to retain their licences. Some colleges offer workshops and short courses that meet those requirements.

Historically, the development of services has always preceded legislation and the requirement for training. Appendix 1 gives a brief overview of the development of services, training and legislation.

Colleges and the Delivery of Professional Development

This section provides an overview of the types of professional development currently offered by the colleges. It also looks at trends in identified needs and issues for both colleges and the field in the delivery of and participation in professional development.

Available Professional Development

A scan of community college websites and a review of the postsecondary training survey material from the Child Care Sector Study identified the colleges that offer post-diploma ECCE programs and ECCE courses and activities that do not lead to a formal postsecondary credential.

Table 2 provides an overview of these programs. Note: Alberta and British Columbia have two levels of required training. Alberta requires one in four program staff to have a one-year certificate and directors to have a two-year diploma. British Columbia requires early childhood educators to have a one-year certificate, and a post-basic certificate or diploma to be the designated staff in an infant/toddler or special needs program. In this table, both types of training are considered part of the legislated requirements and are not included. Both levels of training are widely available in the respective provinces.

TABLE 2

EXAMPLES OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OFFERED BY COMMUNITY COLLEGES

College	Professional development activity	Comments
British Columbia		
Capilano College	• 150-hour family child care certificate program • Some special needs courses open to the general public	
College of the Rockies	• 126-hour Family Day Care Program Certificate	• ECE Diploma Program available through semi-distance format
Douglas College	• Good Beginnings – Introduction to Family Child Care	
Kwantlen University College	• Good Beginnings – Introduction to Family Child Care – available in English and Chinese • Workshops on Preventing Child Sexual Abuse	• College has applied to offer Diploma in Early Childhood Education, which would replace the post-basic certificate programs
Langley Community Education	• Family Child Care • School Age Care	
Malaspina University-College	• Introduction to Family Child Care • Art Activities with Children	• In the spring of 1999, the college sponsored a one-day conference on Supported Child Care at the Powell River campus
North Island College	• 10-month, 150-hour Family Day Care Certificate Program • 150-hour Supported Child Care Certificate Program	• Students who successfully complete the Supported Child Care Training Program may receive credit for a particular course in the Post-Basic Special Needs Certificate
Northern Lights Community College	• 6 modules in nutrition for preschoolers • Several modules in Caring for Children Who Require Extra Support	• ECE certificate and diploma program available through distance education
Northwest Community College		• Post-basic certificate programs available through distance education
Okanagan University College	• Supported Child Care aide course which ladders into post-basic program • Offers some family child care training, sponsored by local Child Care Resource and Referral Program	
Open Learning Agency		• Good Beginnings 30-hour family child care course available through distance education
Selkirk College	• 150-hour family child care training program: grants 2 units of credit for health component of ECE certificate • Supported child care training through Strategic Initiatives funding; individual credit transfer to post-basic certificate	• Professional development workshops held regularly for the community

British Columbia (cont'd)		
University College of the Fraser Valley	• 10-month, 150-hour Family Day Care Training Certificate • 6-course Supported Child Care program – eligible for transfer credit to ECE program	• On occasion, offers workshops on supported child care, curriculum
University College at Vancouver	• Montesson Primary Diploma – 1 year, full-time	
Vancouver Community College	• Curriculum-based workshops held in various child care centres • "City-Wide" offerings – one- or two-day workshops, free of charge on topical issues • Good Beginnings 30-hour family child care course • Contemporary Social Issues in Child Care • 150-hour School Age Child Care Certificate • 50-hour Day Care Orientation course	• Good Beginnings available through distance education
Alberta		
Alberta Vocational College	• School Age Child Care Certificate	
Grant MacEwan Community College	• Early Childhood Development Diploma – advanced standing to those working in the field • Introduction to Out of School Care – must be working with school-age children, and have background knowledge in three course areas • Post-Diploma Certificate in Early Childhood Development Administration - 1-year, full-time • 50-hour Day Care Orientation	• Full-time and part-time outreach Early Childhood Development courses taught in communities by request • Introduction to Out of School Care available through distance education • Holds 1-day Out of School Care conference, as well as a pre-conference credit course
Lakeland College	• 50-hour Day Care Orientation course	
Lethbridge Community College	• 50-hour Day Care Orientation course	• Early Childhood Development certificate program and several courses of the Early Childhood Development diploma program offered through distance education
Medicine Hat College		• Periodically offers workshops on curriculum, after-school care
Mount Royal College		• On request, delivers ECE programs on reserve • Holds spring workshops for the field • Applied to deliver Applied Degree in Child, Youth and Family Studies
Manitoba		
Red River Community College	• Infant Care Post-Diploma Certificate • Studies in Special Needs Child Care Post-Diploma Certificate • Studies in Aboriginal Child Care Post-Diploma Certificate • 4-month Post-Diploma Child Care Administration Certificate	• ECE diploma program taught in First Nations communities upon request • Held Summer Institute for Infant Care Post-Diploma Certificate for the first time in 1998

Ontario		
Algonquin College	• Early Childhood Education Resource Teacher Post-Diploma Certificate • Home Child Care Training Program	
Centennial College	• Post Diploma Certificates in Early Childhood Education, Special Needs and Early Childhood Administration	
Conestoga College	• Early Childhood Education Resource Teacher Post Diploma Certificate • Offers non-credit courses in child abuse prevention and family life	
Confederation College		• ECE diploma offered through distance education
Durham College	• Post-Diploma Certificate in Early Childhood Administration • Post-Diploma Certificate in School-age programming	• Post-Diploma Certificate in School-age programming. Available via correspondence and on-line
George Brown College	• Post-Diploma Certificate in Early Childhood Administration, Infant/Toddler Education and Early Intervention	• Collaborated with West End Créche to develop a course in special needs • course credit can be applied to Post-Diploma Certificate in Administration or Early Intervention
Fanshawe College	• Post-Diploma Certificate in Early Childhood Administration, Infant/Toddler Education and Early Childhood Education Resource Teacher	
Georgian College	• Post-Diploma Resource Teacher Program	
Humber College	• Post Diploma Advanced Studies in Special Needs Certificate	
Lambton College	• Post-Diploma in Early Childhood Education Resource Teacher Certificate; Infant/Toddler Care and Guidance • Offers several non-credit courses on children with special needs	
Loyalist College	• Post-Diploma Early Childhood Education Resource Teacher Certificate	• A Reggio Emilia Certificate via distance education is planned subject to provincial approval
Mohawk College	• Post-Diploma Early Childhood Education Resource Teacher Certificate	
Niagara College	• Post-Diploma Certificates in Early Childhood Education Resource Teacher, Infant Care and Education, Early Childhood Education Administration	• Participant in Partners in Practice Mentoring program - with College of the North Atlantic and Child Care Connection-NS • Matches recent graduates with "excellent" practitioners
Northern College	• Post-Diploma Certificate in Early Childhood Education Administration	

Ontario (cont'd)		
Sault College	• Post-Diploma Certificate in Infant/Toddler Care and Education	
Seneca College	• Post-Diploma Certificates in Resource Teacher/Early Interventionist, Administration	
Sheridan College	• Post-Diploma Montessori Early Childhood Teacher Education program • Post-Diploma ECE Supervision and Administration certificate • Family Day Care Certificate program – grants advanced standing in infant/toddler component of ECE program • Four-part course on curriculum Resource Building • Five-part workshop series in High/Scope	• College is in the process of becoming a teacher certification centre with the High/Scope Foundation
Sir Sanford Fleming College	• Post-Diploma Certificate in Child and Family Studies	
St. Clair College	• Post-Diploma Certificate Program for Child Care Administrators • Puppet workshops, parenting workshops	
St. Lawrence College	• Home Child Care certificate • School-Age Child Care Certificate	
Quebec		
CEGEP Edouard Montpetit	• Non-credit courses on family child	
CEGEP de Rouyn Noranda	• Four modules in family child care	
Vanier College	• 30-hour Teacher Effectiveness Training for Early Childhood Educators	
Nova Scotia		
Nova Scotia Community College	• Advanced Diploma in Early Childhood Management and Special Needs – full-time, 10-month program	
Holland College		• Occasional general interest courses that may be taken to meet professional development requirements
Newfoundland and Labrador		
College of the North Atlantic		• Early Childhood Diploma Program offered through distance education
Yukon		
Yukon College	• Works in partnership with Partners for Children CAP-C program to deliver community-based training • Some courses may be applied for credit toward Level I certification	

Sources: key informant interview, 1996 survey data gathered for the Child Care Sector Study, on-line course calendars

As can be seen in the table, there are more opportunities for professional development in colleges in Ontario and British Columbia. Ontario offers numerous post-diploma credentials, while British Columbia colleges are more likely to have certificate programs and other courses/activities for which there are few formal prerequisite requirements. These are the only two provinces that offer certificate training specific to family child care. It is interesting to note that Quebec CEGEPs offer almost no professional development activities.

The majority of professional development currently offered falls into the following categories:

- post-diploma certificates in early intervention/special needs, infant/toddler care, and administration and management; and
- courses in family child care, school-age child care and, in British Columbia, supported child care, which give the student some form of credit that may be applied in a limited way to other courses of study, plus a limited number of non-credit workshops and short courses.

Approaches to Professional Development – Six College Profiles

In spite of some trends in types of programs offered, colleges have different approaches and philosophies, which influence how various programs are initiated and delivered. Material gathered through interviews with faculty heads of six ECCE college programs form the basis of the following profiles.

Selkirk College in the Kootenay region of British Columbia has offered an ECE program since 1978. It currently offers a basic ECCE certificate program on a full-time basis during the day, and an Infant/Toddler post-basic certificate on a part-time basis. Students interested in receiving a post-basic Special Needs certificate may enrol in the Classroom and Community Support Worker (CCSW) program and take the required credit courses. The basic ECCE certificate program has been extended from 10 months to 12, starting in fall 1999.

The college also offers a 150-hour family child care certificate program, which runs two nights during the week and on Saturdays. As well as being offered at the main campus in Castlegar, the program has been delivered in three other communities—Trail, Nelson and Castlo—through the college extension sites, as well as at community agencies. Graduates receive two units of transfer credit for the health component of an ECCE certificate. The college is actively involved in the process of PLAR.

Under the federal-provincial Strategic Initiatives program for child care in British Columbia, Selkirk received funding to deliver courses in supported child care, the province's new approach to delivering inclusive care for children with special needs. Offered on an ongoing basis until the Strategic Initiatives funding ended on March 31, 1999, the program delivered the same courses required for credit in the CCSW program, but offered them on weekends and evenings. There were no prerequisites for taking these courses, unlike those delivered through the CCSW stream. No certificate is granted for completion of the supported child care courses,

but a student may receive credit for individual courses, which can then be applied toward the post-basic certificate once other prerequisites have been met. There were several family child care providers enrolled.

In addition to the formal supported child care courses, through the Strategic Initiatives funding, the college offered supported child care workshops to the community at large. Participants included licensed practitioners, family child care providers and parents.

In an attempt to attract family child care providers into college programs, the college takes courses out to the community. Classes in a regular credit program are sometimes held in community locations, such as the local Child Care Resource and Referral Program. Members of the community, both caregivers and parents, are invited to attend the class, which is delivered in a workshop format, at no charge. As well as providing a professional development opportunity for providers in a familiar and comfortable environment, students experience different work environments. The experience of faculty has been that family child care providers often feel intimidated by college courses, thinking that they will be too theoretical. They have found that many providers are isolated, not confident in their abilities or comfortable outside their own setting. With access to classes in the community, more providers are attending, some of whom then register in more formal credit-bearing programs.

The college offers many professional development workshops for the child care community throughout the year. All are done on faculty volunteer time and are free to the community. Topics include child guidance, emerging curriculum, ethics, confidentiality and professionalism. Approximately three times a year, inservice workshops are conducted for individual centres, the contents of which are tailored to the centre's specific needs. Two or three meetings a year are held for centres which have practicum students on placement.

The college seeks out ways to work collaboratively with the community. The first Kootenay conference of the local branch of Early Childhood Education British Columbia (ECEBC) was held in 1998, attended by all ECCE college faculty and students. The college believes that the organizations are at the seat of the issues and are well suited to deal with topics related to practice, ethics and professionalism. The college often uses ECEBC's written materials and resources in its courses. It believes that the colleges are well situated to stay current on new and emerging approaches and that many opportunities for collaboration are available between the colleges and the professional associations and child care organizations.

Concerns of the college include the calibre of recent ECCE students. Faculty suggested that students who are academically stronger are being actively counselled out of ECCE at the high school level, while the weaker ones are being encouraged to enrol.

Vancouver Community College (VCC) has offered ECE since 1965. Currently, all the early childhood programs are delivered on a part-time basis through the Continuing Education

department. The ECCE basic certificate program can be completed in a two-year period. The college also offers a post-basic Infant/Toddler certificate program. A 150-hour School Age certificate program is available for those who currently or wish to work with 5- to 12-year-olds, and can be completed in one year. PLAR for ECCE is being developed and will be available in fall 1999.

Several short courses are also offered, depending on need and demand. In 1998-99, the following courses were available, all of which provide a statement of completion:

- the 30-hour **Good Beginnings** family child care program;
- **About Supported Child Care**, for family child care providers and centre-based staff. The course is delivered in three modules of 12 hours each; and
- **Contemporary Social Issues for the Child Care Community**, a 30-hour course, offered over a 10-week period, aimed at child care providers and staff as well as social service workers, teachers, community service organizations and volunteers.

The college holds Out and About curriculum-based workshops in community child care centres.

The college ECCE program coordinator sits on the Vancouver Community-Wide Training Committee, along with members of child care organizations and associations, and provincial government licensing officials. Committee members share information on individual agency initiatives and activities, identify training and development needs and work collaboratively to fill the gaps. Planned through the training committee, VCC offers a one- or two-evening or weekend activity two or three times a year. The workshops, intended to be timely and topical, are offered at no charge and usually have between 50 and 100 participants.

The college makes extensive use of community faculty, and knowledgeable and experienced individuals from the field, who are usually paid a small honorarium. For longer courses, faculty are hired on a sessional basis. There is considerable flexibility in the development of courses through continuing education, but the department is intended to be the revenue-generating arm of the college. This provides a challenge to offer courses at a fee the child care community can afford.

The college believes that it has a leadership role to play in professional development and that it is best operationalized through community collaboration. It remains a challenge to reach people who are not comfortable with a college setting, particularly family child care providers. Faculty indicated that there is a general malaise among many child care staff. There is such little financial reward or recognition for the additional training that there is little incentive to participate.

VCC has taken the lead agency role in working with several community-based partners to develop a proposal to pilot a post-basic certificate in Leadership, Administration and

Management. The proposal is before the Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology and, if approved, would be the first of its kind in the province.

Mount Royal College in Calgary has been offering an ECE program for more than 20 years. It currently offers a two-year diploma in ECCE, on a full-time basis. It has a one-year certificate program that is offered in the evenings, primarily for individuals who are currently working in the field. In addition, courses are available through continuing education aimed at those who have completed the one-year certificate program and wish to work toward a diploma. Since these courses are offered through continuing education, there are no prerequisites for admission. This means that individuals who may be interested in a career in early childhood, or who may be working in the field and wish to take one course, may enrol.

The college provides, upon request, certificate programs to on-reserve communities. They are delivered in a flexible way that meets the needs of the particular community, with faculty travelling to the community to teach the classes. The college has applied for approval to deliver an applied degree in Child, Youth and Family Studies.

Each year, a one- or two-day spring workshop is held in response to identified community need. The college faculty volunteer their time to develop and organize the event, which is offered for a nominal fee. Workshops are given to mentors of practicum students on an ongoing basis throughout the practicum placement. This activity has been viewed as part of the work necessary to build a strong early childhood community. Upon request, faculty also will speak at staff meetings or give presentations on a particular topic.

In the past, the college offered non-credit courses on ECCE-related topics. However, since all non-credit courses have to operate on at least a cost-recovery basis, they had to be discontinued, as the ECCE field could not pay the necessary fees.

In recent years, the college has changed its focus of early childhood training from centre-based care to the broader field of early childhood care and education. Currently, nannies and family child care providers are enrolled in the certificate program, along with child care centre staff. Practica take place in a variety of settings, including Community Action Program for Children (CAP-C) sites.

The college seeks out ways to work collaboratively with the early childhood community. A faculty member usually sits on the organizing committee for conferences of early childhood professional associations or community-based organizations. Early childhood students at the college are encouraged to join and become involved with child care organizations. Recently, the college received funding from the Alberta government to develop, in collaboration with early childhood agencies, a virtual practicum guide for students. In addition to providing a reference guide, it offers a chat line for students to network and share ideas with others, and to discuss issues and solutions in practicum placements.

Red River College offers a full-time two-year ECCE diploma program that is also available on a part-time basis through continuing education. A First Nations two-year ECCE program is taught in First Nations communities. PLAR is available and actively encouraged. Much of the curriculum is delivered using a competency-based learning approach, which allows for a degree of self-paced study.

Three post-diploma certificate programs are offered through continuing education:
- a Studies in Special Needs Child Care post-diploma certificate program;
- a Studies in Aboriginal Child Care post-diploma certificate program; and
- an Infant/Toddler Care post-diploma certificate program.

Many of the ECCE diploma courses are available through distance education, as are some in the three post-diploma certificate programs. Teleconferencing, telephone tutorials and print materials are the main methods of study. The entire Studies in Aboriginal Child Care certificate program, the prerequisite and two other courses in the Studies in Special Needs Child Care and the prerequisite course for the Infant/Toddler Care certificate are available through distance education. In 1998, for the first time, the Infant/Toddler program was available through a Summer Institute.

The courses offered through continuing education, including distance education, may be taken for general interest, in which case the usual prerequisites do not have to be met.

Each of the post-diploma programs was developed by a college program development fund to which the department had to apply. Programs are developed on the basis of community needs assessments, undertaken either by the college or the community. There has been little demand for family child care or school-age care, but a high demand for a post-diploma certificate in administration and management (which is offered at the University of Manitoba).

Development funds are available to hire an individual to undertake the curriculum design, and to work with a community-based committee, which later forms the Program Advisory Committee. Each early childhood program has a separate program advisory committee in the belief that each has specific and unique needs and requires specific expertise. Continuity among programs delivered through the day program, continuing education and distance education is achieved by the coordinators of each program serving on all three advisory committees.

The college offers no non-credit courses and little professional development to the community. Each instructor is requested to do one activity a year, such as a workshop at the Manitoba Child Care Association (MCCA) conference, or a presentation to a child care centre's board of directors. Most faculty are members of MCCA and students are encouraged to join. Staff from practicum sites are invited to two or three planned workshops on field placements.

Faculty indicated that the college has a responsibility to work collaboratively with the child care community and should look for ways to develop formal methods, through existing mechanisms.

George Brown College of Applied Arts and Technology in Toronto has offered ECCE since 1968. It currently offers, through its full-time program, a one-year Early Childhood Assistant certificate and an ECCE diploma, which can be taken over a two-year period, or continuously for 18 months. The ECCE diploma program is also offered on a part-time basis, through continuing education. Students with a related degree and experience working with children may enter directly into the second year of the program. A two-week orientation course is required before beginning the program. PLAR is available for up to 75 percent of the program, with the remaining 25 percent to be completed in class. Challenge process evaluation and portfolio assessment are the two methods used.

The college has three post-diploma programs available on a part-time basis through continuing education, each of which can be completed within one year:

- a four-course certificate program Working with Children with Special Needs – Early Intervention;
- a six-course Day Care Management Certificate; and
- a three-course Infant/Toddler Specialist Certificate jointly offered by the ECCE departments of George Brown College, Centennial College and Canadian Mothercraft Society.

The college and West End Créche, a multiservice child care organization, collaborated on a course for child care staff on children with special needs. The course is held at the West End Créche and is delivered by George Brown faculty. A course credit is given which may be applied to either the post-diploma Management or Early Intervention certificate. The college also collaborated with the Hinks/Dellcrest Centre in developing a journal on infant emotional health. A faculty member is the editor of the publication, *Ideas,* which is published by George Brown.

The college believes that its primary mandate is to deliver credit programs to the field, in part because Toronto is well served by a range of competent child care and other health and social service organizations which mount various professional development activities. The college views its role as lending support to those activities instead of trying to duplicate them. For example, faculty often conduct workshops at conferences and try to use field placement supervision as an opportunity to bring resources into child care centres.

Funding cutbacks have limited opportunities for the college to deliver community-based programs or one-time workshops. The college, however, offered two two-day workshops in collaboration with the Toronto Child Abuse Centre in spring 1999, on Child Abuse Prevention for Professionals. The workshop was aimed at a variety of professionals working with children, not only those working in ECCE.

Faculty view the professional development role of child care organizations as delivering workshops, bringing in speakers and participating in trade fairs, with the college focussing on courses and programs that require research and preparation of papers. These courses require a level of commitment from the participant, and ensure that there is a degree of rigour involved in receiving a credential.

Sheridan College has taught ECCE since the 1970s. It currently offers a range of certificate and diploma programs through both the daytime and continuing education programs. A one-year Early Childhood Assistant certificate program is offered full time and through continuing education. Graduates with a strong academic standing who wish to continue their education gain entry into the second year of the ECCE diploma program. The two-year ECCE program is also available through continuing education as well as through the full-time program. Both programs focus on children under the age of six. Many of the courses in both programs are eligible for challenge under PLAR. A detailed list of which courses are eligible and the various processes for challenge is available to students. For students who wish to challenge more than two courses, a Portfolio Development course is offered through continuing education.

Individuals with a university degree in a social science or a three-year college diploma in a related field, courses in Developmental Psychology and/or Human Development at a postsecondary level, as well as related work or volunteer experience, may apply for entry to the Early Childhood Intensive Program. This program allows students to graduate with an ECCE diploma after two academic terms.

The college offers a Montessori Early Childhood Teacher Education program for those with an ECCE diploma or a university degree. It is offered during the day in the summer months, followed by a nine-month practicum.

Several other ECCE programs are available through continuing education. They include:
- a post-diploma Early Childhood Education Supervision and Administration certificate;
- a Family Day Care certificate – graduates are eligible for advanced standing in the Infant and Toddler development and programming component of the ECCE program;
- a four-part course on curriculum resource building; and
- a five-part full-day workshop series for ECCE graduates in High/Scope philosophy.

The college is currently in the process of becoming a teacher certification centre with the High/Scope Foundation and will be offering additional related courses in the future. All the early childhood programs offered by the college are provided on a cost-recovery basis and some generate revenue. Enrolment in programs and attendance at workshops has never been a problem; no course offering has ever been cancelled for lack of enrolment.

The college strives for continuity between the programs offered through the full-time program and those offered through continuing education. Course outlines are shared and many of the part-time faculty teach in both programs.

The college sits on the board of the Peel Child Care Committee and also works closely with the Regions of Peel and Halton. Faculty members are often requested to hold workshops for child care staff and are actively involved in joint planning with the community for child care–related training. The college also goes on the road to offer workshops on topics requested by the child care community.

The college believes its priority for professional development is to the post-diploma programs. Faculty members work closely with child care organizations and associations, which they believe have the pulse of the community. They believe the strength of the child care associations is advertising and getting speakers, while the college is the official trainer. A main issue in delivering professional development for the faculty is lack of time; they are all being asked to do more without additional resources.

Le Cégep de Saint-Hyacinthe in St-Hyacinthe, Quebec has been offering ECE programs—techniques déducation en services de garde (TSGE)—for 11 years. It began with an Attestation détudes collégiales (AEC) program offered on a full-time basis during daytime hours or on a part-time basis in the evenings. In addition, it currently offers a three- year diploma program—diplôme détudes collégiales (DEC)—that began in 1997. The first DEC graduates graduated in May 1999.

The AEC is aimed at students already in the workforce or at students enrolled in targeted training programs such as through employment insurance (EI) or social assistance. There is both a short (800 hours) and a long (1200 hours) AEC program. AEC is the minimum training qualification required to meet the regulation for child care workers in a centre-based setting. The admission criteria include high school diploma (secondaire V) or the equivalent. The courses can be credited toward obtaining a diploma in TSGE.

The DEC is a diploma aimed at candidates who want to enter the field. Admission criteria include high school graduation and an interview. The DEC prepares students for various child care settings, including centre-based care, family child care, school-age child care and halte-garderie. There is emphasis on inclusion of children with special needs and children with difficult behaviour.

Some credited courses in TSGE are offered through continuing education. Mostly, they are aimed at family child care providers who need to take 45 hours of training in child development, curricular development, nutrition and safety, and first aid/CPR.

The college used to offer several non-credit workshops or customized courses upon request. However, they had to be offered on a cost-recovery basis and were relatively expensive. In addition, the faculty teaching in adult education were the same who set up the new DEC diploma in TSGE. High cost and the unavailability of qualified trainers led the college to discontinue most of the non-credit courses that used to be offered.

The college offers TSGE students optional workshops that cover topics such as time management, reading techniques, note taking and learning to learn.

The college has an intensive practicum component that relies heavily on community child care centres and family child care agencies. With changes in legislation, the college has had to find an innovative alternative to a lab centre in the Cégep. It has reached an agreement with a local *Centre de la petite enfance* to install a camera on its premises, which will allow for direct observation of a child care setting and interactive communication.

The Demand and Identified Needs for Professional Development

The focus of much of the discussion on the need for professional development is on particular subject areas. Indeed, there was considerable consistency across focus groups and among the literature. Interestingly, almost all of the subject areas identified are included in the core curriculum of preservice ECCE programs.[24] A number of the same subject areas were identified by both centre-based and family caregivers, yet there was no consensus as to whether or not the subject matter could be effectively taught to the same caregivers in the same course.

In addition to particular subject areas, consideration needs to be given to:
- content (i.e. the depth and complexity of the course); and
- delivery methods, such as in-house, community-based workshops, distance education and classroom settings.

Several of the key informants and focus group participants for the child care sector indicated that much of the demand for professional development is driven by the gaps in preservice training.

The Child Care Sector Study identified four main gaps in ECCE curriculum:
- family-centred approach;
- infant/toddler and school-age care;
- special needs; and
- cultural and racial diversity.

Indeed, each of these areas was consistently identified by key informants and in focus groups conducted for this paper as areas where professional development was needed. For the most part, the identified needs were focussed on improving the individual's ability to provide direct care and, to a lesser degree, on management and administration. Caregivers in focus groups were asked what their main professional development needs were; college faculty and community-based trainers were asked what the main demands for professional development were across the sector.

In addition to the items above, the most consistently identified needs and demand for training from front-line caregivers, across settings were:

- dealing with challenging behaviour;
- child development;
- understanding developmentally appropriate practice; and
- communication with parents.

Specific to centre-based front-line caregivers:

- working with older school-age children;
- family studies, family dynamics;
- understanding how to support parents in accessing other community and social supports; and
- peer relationships and conflict resolution.

Specific to centre supervisors/directors:

- organizational, financial and human resource management;
- being an effective supervisor; and
- strategic planning.

Specific to family child care providers:

- working with mixed age groups;
- working more effectively with parents and other adults; and
- administration and income tax preparation.

Since most college programs offered through continuing education have to be at least cost-recovery, they focus on areas were there is a strong identified demand. Yet, college faculty and representatives from community-based training organizations identified a number of areas in which they thought caregivers and directors needed professional development, but which had not been identified by them. They noted the following needs in the field:

- emerging research that often does not get to practitioners. In particular, it was suggested that caregivers need to be better informed about the research on brain development, packaged in a way that is relevant to them;
- better awareness of the societal context and social policy;
- working effectively with other community-serving organizations; and
- leadership and advocacy.

It was also noted that there was virtually no college-delivered professional development that focussed on the specific needs of staff in family child care agencies, family resource/child

care resource programs, and working in programs that serve high-risk families, such as CAP-C and Aboriginal Head Start.

The needs and demands for particular subject matter in professional development fall into three main categories. They are not mutually exclusive, but can be loosely grouped in the following way.

TABLE 3

IDENTIFIED NEEDS FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

	Working with children	Managing the resources	Working with adults
All caregivers	• Child development • Behaviour guidance • Curriculum and programming • Providing for children with special needs • Infant/toddler care • Diversity issues • Preventing child abuse • Understanding emerging research	• Managing program budgets • Making effective use of community resources	• Effective communication with parents • Understanding the ethnocultural context • How to make effective use of community resources • Enhancing professionalism
Centre-based care	• School-age care • Program planning • Best practice • Understanding the legislation	• Financial management • Maximizing available funding • Human resource management • Administration • Being an effective supervisor • Working with boards of directors • Strategic planning • Leadership • Different programs for new and aspiring supervisors and those with considerable experience	• Team building • Dealing with conflict • Working as part of an interdisciplinary team • Understanding family dynamics • Career development • Understanding social issues
Family child care	• Working with mixed age groups	• Financial management • Income tax preparation • Developing contracts • Understanding the impact of the program on family members	• For caregivers: Effective networking - Peer support • Caring for the caregiver • For agency staff: Understanding adult learning • Modelling good practice

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The fact that many of these areas are covered in preservice training programs suggests that many caregivers are learning on the job, and those with preservice education need ongoing reinforcement. Many focus group participants and key informants stressed the need for professional development geared to various levels of experience. For centre-based caregivers, it was noted that there was not enough professional development for those with considerable experience, whether in working with children, the master/mentor early childhood educator or for seasoned directors.

Most of the identified needs for professional development were those aimed at enhancing the knowledge and skill of the individual. A few key informants, however, stressed the need for professional development at an organizational—usually child care centre—level. Training all staff in a particular curriculum approach, implementing new policies in the centre, and taking a more family-centred approach were a few examples given. In-house training was thought to be the only effective way of undertaking such activities and skilled trainers/facilitators were often difficult to find.

It is evident that people in the field have a need for ongoing training and professional development in a number of areas, some of which are more available than others. What is not clear is the best way to provide this. Much of the professional development is currently provided in a way that minimizes the cost to the participant and for the training program or organization to at least break even. Measures of effectiveness usually include only two main categories—participant satisfaction and ongoing enrolment. It does not appear that assessments are conducted on the outcomes of the particular professional development on job performance or improvements in quality, even anecdotally.[25] Only programs that result in a postsecondary credential have identified learning outcomes.

Does the current mix of college and community-based training have a positive impact on the quality of care? We do not know. Several Canadian studies have suggested concern with the quality of care in the regulated sector,[26] and very little is known about the quality of care in the unregulated sector. There is an evident need to look at a more coordinated approach to career development, ensuring that the necessary opportunities are available to develop the identified necessary skill sets, and assessing them to determine if objectives have been met.

Much of the professional development activity in which the field participates is delivered by community-based organizations. When caregivers were asked in what kinds of professional development they had participated, conferences and workshops were by far the most common response. Many indicated that the enhanced sense of professionalism provided by networking and peer interaction was the main benefit. While this is an important facet of developing the profession, it cannot meet all the objectives of professional development.

One area of need that was identified, particularly by child care organizations, was leadership development. Concern was expressed that real systemic change is needed in child care, which

requires development in areas beyond day-to-day good practice and management, where most of the professional development is currently focussed.

As one college faculty member put it:

> *Instead of professional development, we should be thinking of developing the profession, and to do that, you have to have more opportunities for higher learning. Our current system requiring one-year certificates and two-year diplomas only trains people to fit into our existing system, which is not an effective one. If there were more degree programs, we could be educating people to look at the system more critically and gain the skills to affect change.*

Issues in Professional Development

Participants in the focus groups and key informants identified a broad spectrum of issues. Some were consistent with general findings in the literature,[27] and some were specific to particular communities. In particular, opinions on the role that colleges play in the delivery of professional development, the relationships among the colleges, community-based trainers and the field, and attitudes toward the colleges were striking in their variation. The key issues identified have been grouped into two main categories: issues for the field and issues for the colleges. Issues for the child care field fall into the following four areas.

Access to Professional Development

There was general consensus that funding cutbacks to postsecondary institutions, reduced professional development funding for child care programs, and the end of CCIF have had a significant impact on the availability of affordable professional development. CCIF, it was noted, not only paid for the development of training materials, but often allowed programs to be delivered at no or little cost to the caregiver and sometimes paid for staff/caregiver replacement. Many child care programs have reduced, eliminated or never had professional development dollars in their budgets.

Most of the focus group participants who were enrolled in post-diploma certificate programs indicated that their organizations would pay for half the costs upon successful completion. Others indicated that the cost of longer courses of study was a barrier to participation and that they sought out less expensive opportunities. Family child care providers, who are self-employed, may well seek agency and resource/support program–sponsored professional development as they have no organizational structure or support to facilitate their participation in longer courses of study.

A few centres had professional development days for staff which allowed them to participate in day-long activities or workshops occurring on a regular work day. Others facilitated

participation by, for example, permitting a staff member enrolled in an evening course to work the early shift. In most provinces, it was suggested that release days and assisting with the cost of professional development was more likely to be available in a large multiservice agency or a unionized centre. Programs in Ontario and Quebec appeared to be more likely to offer this benefit than other provinces.

The work of child care is physically taxing. Several caregivers mentioned the difficulty in making the necessary commitment to evening or weekend courses when they were unable to take time off during the day. Many suggested that if they were going to take college-related professional development, their first preference would be at the college where they received their preservice training. Several mentioned that the college was not close to their place of work but they would be more likely to not attend a program than to seek out a college in a more convenient location.

Despite the issues of cost and timing, a wide range of professional development was available. In most provinces, the majority is undertaken by ECCE associations and organizations, but there is increasing college involvement in several provinces.

The Content and Delivery of Professional Development

Several caregivers enrolled in post-diploma programs consistently expressed dissatisfaction with the level at which the courses were taught. They indicated that the manner of delivery was neither appropriate to their abilities nor did it take into account their years of experience and existing knowledge. They suggested that the content was much the same as in the preservice program and could be offered in a shorter period of time at a higher academic level. While they benefited from the content, it was the interaction and problem-solving discussions with other program participants that was the main benefit. Other caregivers mentioned that they were not engaged in college activities because new courses were rarely offered and that there was little aimed at experienced staff or directors.

Very little family child care training is provided through the colleges, except in British Columbia. Some key informants indicated that college programs did not reflect or respect the distinct nature of family child care. There were issues related to the trainers and their lack of direct knowledge of family child care. Distance education was suggested as a delivery model in which caregivers might feel more comfortable.

Distance education for rural communities was also noted as a positive delivery method. The centre director of a program in rural Manitoba noted that three of her staff were completing their ECCE diplomas through distance education and that another was enrolled in the ECCE management program at the University of Manitoba.

Disincentives to Professional Development

The lack of recognition for additional training and professional development is a major issue for the field. Caregivers feel undervalued and underpaid to begin with and then see no wage increase after participating in an often relatively expensive program.

Some child care programs are seeing staff who have a considerable amount of training and professional development leaving child care to move into funded programs that offer higher wages. This may be a positive career move for the individual, but a loss of valuable human resources to parts of the field.

Lack of credit given for community-based training and limited credit transfer between and among college programs remains an issue. The lack of transfer credit for family child care certificates and the lack of recognition at the university level for post-diploma certificates were of particular concern.

It was suggested that some organizations only supported their staff to participate in professional development when they could be assured of the benefit to the organization. One focus group participant mentioned that her agency was reluctant to give her time off to participate in a particular professional development activity because of a concern, that once better trained, she would seek out better-paying career possibilities.

Role of the Colleges and Their Relationship to the Field

There was little consensus among the field on how they perceived colleges and the role the college played in the development of the child care sector. Further study is certainly needed before any definitive conclusions can be drawn. There are two main challenges in attempting to describe and analyze the issues identified in relation to the role of the college. First, is trying to find a relationship between the particular issues and specific characteristics of the college. Second, is trying to reconcile the differences between how some colleges view themselves and how they are viewed by the field.

There was general acknowledgement by the field that colleges have undergone funding cuts, resulting in higher workloads for faculty and leaving little opportunity for new, innovative training development. The lack of resources for training is an issue for both colleges and community-based trainers.

There was also general agreement that preservice ECCE, whether a one-year or two-year program, was not long enough and that ongoing professional development was needed to address the gaps in training.

There was a considerable range of opinion on the relationship between the college and the field. Some saw the college as an active participant in the community, collaborating with

community-based trainers and looking for ways to make professional development more accessible and user friendly. Others found the colleges rigid, inaccessible and lacking respect for those working in the field. While the views ranged between the two extremes, caregivers, child care organizations and community trainers from individual communities shared common views.

At one end of the spectrum, issues expressed by the field can be summarized as follows:

- the increased pressure for revenue-producing courses that often results in courses that do not develop the field;
- a perception that colleges are territorial and will not share information on their programs, resulting in a lack of collaboration, and increased program fragmentation;
- a lack of links between continuing education and the daytime programs, resulting in little consistency in course content;
- inactive and ineffective program advisory committees. Several individuals who sat on advisory committees believed that their input was not welcome and that the purpose of their participation was to rubber-stamp college recommendations;
- a rigid approach that is not user-friendly—a lack of willingness to reach out to the broader child care sector;
- not developing new programs or adapting curriculum in a timely manner;
- lack of support and respect for child care staff in field placements sites. This was a major issue with some colleges. Staff from several practicum sites indicated that college supervisors interfered with their program, and held little regard for the centre's policies. Several indicated that the expectations of their centre were higher than those of the college, requiring staff to evaluate students at a lower level than they thought was acceptable. Several supervisors indicated that the quality of students, on average, was getting lower, as were the college's expectations. As a result, there was concern that students were not being adequately prepared to do the job well; and
- the need or desire for a credential in contrast to the preference for community-based training.

At the other end of the spectrum, there were very positive views of colleges and the role they played in the community. These colleges did not share a lot of characteristics, in terms of where they were located, their size and the individual programs they offered. They did, however, share the following elements:

- outreach efforts to underserved populations, often taking courses out to community locations;
- attempts to make programs more user friendly in approach and content;
- collaborating with the field in identifying needs and collaborating on the development and delivery of programs, courses and workshops;

- planning for professional development in a coordinated way so that community-based trainers and colleges were not in competition with each other;
- faculty participation and encouragement of students' participation in child care conferences; and
- considering student evaluations in a meaningful way and adapting the program when necessary.

Issues for the Colleges

Just as the field had very different views of colleges, college faculty had different views about their responsibility to and role in the delivery of ECCE professional development. Colleges mentioned the declining resources, the push to develop revenue-producing courses and the additional workload for faculty. There was general agreement that more training is needed on an ongoing basis. There were three main trends in approaches to delivery:

- The trend in Quebec is, for most part, for the Cégeps to focus on AEC and DEC training, and for the child care organizations to be responsible for all professional development.
- The trend in Ontario is for colleges to focus on post-diploma certificate programs and other courses of study that result in a credential, with the child care organizations primarily undertaking the balance of professional development activities.
- The trend in British Columbia is for colleges to offer a mix of credit and non-credit-bearing professional development, ranging from longer courses to one-day workshops. There are many post-basic certificate programs, but no post-diploma programs in ECCE. A few university colleges, however, offer a degree in Child and Youth Care, in which ECCE credits are recognized. There is a greater degree of collaboration with community trainers in both the development and delivery of some professional development. Good Beginnings family child care training, for example, developed by VCC and the Western Canada Family Child Care Association, is taught at both a number of colleges and in the community by Child Care Resource and Referral Programs.

Summary and Conclusions

The ECCE workforce needs and wants professional development. Professional development needs to be considered as part of a coherent framework of career development, in which both the demands for various types of child care and the experience and training of caregivers who provide it are taken into account.

In the short term, much of the professional development will need to fill the gaps and support the learning gained in preservice training. Both the postsecondary and child care systems suffer from a lack of resources, making the development of new and innovative areas of study difficult to achieve. In addition, the lack of public recognition for the value of

caregiving, and the resulting low wages in the field, are a disincentive to invest in expensive training, especially when it does not result in an increase in pay.

Inadequate or non-existent training requirements in some provinces discourage professional development. Fewer opportunities are available for professional development in either college or community-based training where there are fewer training requirements. In the longer term, change to the whole structure, legislation and funding of child care will be necessary for an effective system of professional development.

The only reason that there is much professional development is because most of it is provided on a voluntary basis. Much of what drives the development of particular workshops, conferences and speaker series is the availability of knowledgeable individuals willing to offer their services for little or no fee. Much of the college-associated professional development is done by individual faculty members outside their regular jobs. Many of the child care associations around the country operate entirely on volunteer labour, with no paid staff.

In spite of the difficult climate in which child care operates, there are opportunities for colleges to take a leadership role in addressing training and professional development for the field. *Our Child Care Workforce*[28] contains five recommendations aimed at postsecondary institutions, that deal with issues of:

- gaps in service;
- gaps in skills;
- field practice;
- credit and non-credit professional development opportunities; and
- transferability and articulation of credits.

Representatives from the Steering Committee will be consulting the field on ways to act on the recommendations and securing funding to begin work on the process.

Many of the areas that were identified as needs of the field are available, at least at an entry level. There is a need for more in-depth training for experienced caregivers, and refresher courses to stay current with the research literature. There are, however, three areas where there are major gaps:

- **Training for the broader early childhood workforce**
  Professional development is needed for ECCE graduates who are moving into areas where there are no legislated training requirements, but where ECCE-trained staff are often sought out. These include work in family child care agencies, family resource programs, and early intervention programs for children at risk, such as CAP-C and Aboriginal Head Start. Professional development opportunities specific to those jobs are very limited.

- **Family child care training**
  Colleges consistently commented on the difficulty in attracting family child care providers into family child care or other ECCE-related training. It was suggested that colleges are not a frame of reference for many caregivers, at least until they feel comfortable in the environment. Family child care represents a major part of the workforce, yet most caregivers are not connected to any form of training. A criticism of some of the existing college-related family child care training is that it is taught by individuals who have little knowledge of family child care and the specific issues that caregivers face.

  One successful model of introductory training for family child care is the 30-hour Good Beginnings program. Its development was a collaborative effort of VCC and Western Canada Family Child Care Association. Even though there are no legislated training requirements for family child care providers in British Columbia, the program has become the standard of entry for the field. It is taught at a number of community colleges, including through distance education, and at Child Care Resource and Referral Programs. It grants a certificate of completion, but not credit into other ECCE programs.

  Since there are few college faculty members with family child care backgrounds, and few family child care providers with experience in teaching, possibly a co-mentoring approach could be piloted. Pairing experienced instructors with experienced caregivers could further each other's understanding of what might comprise career-path training and how it should be delivered.

- **Leadership training**
  Very little training is available that supports leadership development in the field. There are limited opportunities for experienced individuals in the field to expand the breadth and depth of their knowledge. This includes those teaching in the field, researchers, licensing officials and policy analysts, as well as experienced child care staff and directors. The need for systemic change has been identified time and again, yet few have an in-depth understanding of the contexts of broader social policy, best practice and cross-provincial issues and differences in order to be effective change agents.

  Colleges need to work in collaboration with each other and with community-based trainers. Effective use of limited resources requires a planned approach to professional development that minimizes duplication, makes the best use of human resources and is part of a coordinated series of training opportunities. It could also facilitate a process of granting recognition to community-based training, which could be transferred to a formal course of study.

Colleges need to evaluate their professional development programs and methods of delivery. Are they having an impact on quality? Is the content and detail appropriate to the target group? Are the competencies gained through distance education comparable to those gained through traditional methods of study? Does participation in professional development activities encourage more training? Are the learning outcomes different when there are assignments and exams in a course of study? These questions need to be answered to ensure appropriate and effective service delivery.

Colleges should ensure that faculty participate in professional development to enhance their own skills and knowledge, and to encourage a learning culture among their students.

Colleges will need to work with their community partners to seek funding for program development and delivery beyond the usual vehicles. Existing college and child care funding can only support the development of new and innovative programs and delivery models in a limited way.

Colleges and the child care community should work together to develop a framework for career development for all caregivers that:

- recognizes the knowledge and skill gained from experience and various forms of credit and non-credit learning, through mechanisms such as PLAR;
- encourages ongoing education, training and professional development which is appropriate for individual caregivers and the child care workforce as a whole, and which can lead to organizational improvement; and
- is part of a coordinated, articulated plan to ensure an appropriately trained workforce with career mobility and opportunities.

Once professional development becomes a seamless piece of the overall approach to education and training, rather than an isolated add-on, the following definition may more aptly apply.

Professional development is *a process of continual learning that both draws on and contributes to the growing body of knowledge in the field of early childhood care and education.*

Endnotes

1. Beach, Bertrand & Cleveland, 1998.
2. Ibid.
3. Goss Gilroy Inc., 1998.
4. National Family Day Care Training Project, 1998.
5. Chandler, 1997; Doherty, 1997; Mulligan, 1997.
6. Friendly, 1994; Doherty & Stuart, 1996.
7. Bertrand & Beach, 1999.
8. Goss Gilroy Inc., 1998.
9. Friendly, 1994; Beach & Bertrand (in press).
10. There are no training requirements for any staff in New Brunswick and the Northwest Territories, and only for supervisors in Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island. Newfoundland introduced a requirement for training in 1999.
11. Oberhuemer & Ulich, 1997.
12. Corsini, 1991.
13. Galinsky et al., 1994.
14. Canadian Child Day Care Federation/Canadian Day Care Advocacy Association, 1992.
15. Goss Gilroy Inc., 1998.
16. Beach et al., 1998. Numbers of caregivers were calculated from data in the National Child Care Survey of 1988, and from Cycle 1 data of the National Longitudinal Study of Children and Youth of 1994-95; custom tabulations from the 1991 Census data provide the education information.
17. Bertrand & Beach, 1999.
18. Willer, 1994; Chandler, 1997; Minnesota Institute for Early Childhood Education, 1998.
19. National Family Day Care Training Project, 1998, p. 19.
20. Chandler, 1997.
21. Willer, 1994.
22. Canadian Child Care Federation, 1998, p. 4. The following documents were synthesized in *Our Child Care Workforce*: Canadian Child Day Care Federation, 1991; Early Childhood Educators of British Columbia, 1992; Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services, College Standards and Accreditation Council, 1996; Multi-Lateral Task Force on Training, Career Pathing and Labour Mobility in the Community Social Services Sector, 1997.
23. Bertrand & Beach, 1999.
24. Beach, Bertrand & Cleveland, 1998.
25. Kagan & Neuman, 1996.
26. SPR Associates, 1986; Goelman & Pence, 1988; Lyon & Canning, 1995; Doherty & Stuart, 1996.
27. Early Childhood Educators of British Columbia, 1993; Morris, Evans & Goss-Prowse, 1995; Unit for Child Care Research, 1995; Chandler, 1997; Read, 1998.
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Appendix 1

The Development of Services and Regulation

	1800s	Early-mid 1900s	1940s and 50s	1960s and 70s	1980s and 90s
Provision of services	• Infant schools • First charitable crèches • Some specialized services introduced for children with special needs • Settlement houses - Initiatives to promote parent education • First public kindergarten in Toronto 1883	• Charitable/ religious programs aimed at sole-support women more widespread • First nursery school began 1926 • Supervised playgrounds introduced	• Wartime day nurseries • Expansion of nursery schools • Widespread availability of kindergartens in the public school system	• Growth of child care for working mothers • Regulated family child care introduced in 70s • Parent/child resource centres introduced • Introduction of child care subsidies, income tax deductions for child care • Maternity benefits introduced	• Growth of compensatory care, early intervention programs • "child development" programs • CAP-C • Aboriginal Head Start • First Nations/Inuit Child Care Initiative • Parental benefits introduced • Growth of family resource programs
Regulation			• Centre-based care: B.C., Alberta and Ontario	• All other provinces/ territories except NWT • Regulated family child care introduced • CAP introduced 1966 requirements for cost sharing	• NWT • All provinces have regulated family child care, except Newfoundland*
Postsecondary training offered		• First early childhood teacher program • Institute for Child Studies	• Institute for Child Studies developed training program for staff during Second World War • First community college opens 1957	• Colleges start offering ECE	• Family child care training • School-age child care training • Post-diploma programs in ECE • Degree programs in ECE and related studies

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	1800s	Early-mid 1900s	1940s and 50s	1960s and 70s	1980s and 90s
Other training offered			• First professional association AECEO began 1950	• Introduction of other professional associations and advocacy groups • Family daycare agencies begin offering training	• Many training programs initiated through CCIF • Widespread professional associations and advocacy organizations • Family child care associations and networks
Postsecondary training required				• Training requirements begin to be introduced	• More defined training requirements: Stil no training requirements for staff * In N..B. and N.W.T. • No jurisdiction requires all staff to have postsecondary training
Other training required					• P.E.I./Que. introduce college-delivered training for regulated family child care (30 hr. and 45 hr.) • P.E.I. and B.C. require ongoing professional development for centre-based staff • Saskatchewan requires ongoing professional development for regulated family child care

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